

## More talks, more killing

The Washington summit failed to agree on anything except further talks, while the Israeli army went on a war footing and the Palestinian death toll continued to mount

### Mubarak at the High Dam

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak yesterday inaugurated several new ambitious projects in Al-Wadi Al-Gadid Governorate and inspected the measures being taken at the Aswan High Dam to face this year's Nile flood.

Mubarak also opened a railway line joining the port of Safage on the Red Sea and the city of Kharga in Al-Wadi Al-Gadid. The 680km-long railway passes by the phosphate mines in Abu Tahir and crosses the Nile Valley near the city of Qena. It is expected to create new industry and lead to an economic boom in the governorate.

During his visit to Aswan, Mubarak was briefed by Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources Abdel-Hadi Radi on this year's Nile flood and on preparations to channel excess water into the Toshki spillway, which will be used for the first time since the High Dam opened in the late 1960s. Radi said Lake Nasser would be at maximum capacity by 12 October and water would then flow into the Toshki spillway.

### Erbakan visit

TURKISH Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan arrived in Cairo yesterday on a two-day official visit. Tomorrow he heads for Libya on a controversial trip which has led one of his cabinet ministers to threaten to resign.

Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouli received Erbakan, who was accompanied by a large delegation including businessmen, at Cairo's International Airport. The Turkish premier was expected to meet President Hosni Mubarak before his departure for Libya.

United States officials have criticised Erbakan's planned visit to Libya, his second trip in a short while to a country which Washington accuses of sponsoring terrorism. The Islamist premier's visit to Iran two months ago also drew sharp criticism from American officials, particularly after he signed a \$2 billion gas deal with Tehran.

Turkey's Interior Minister Mehmet Agar, a key member of the junior coalition partner, the True Path Party, has threatened to resign if Erbakan goes ahead with the Libya visit.

### Easy money

ISRAELI Finance Minister Dan Meridor said the US has confirmed further loan guarantees for Israel covering nearly \$2 billion for the financial year which started on 1 October. America, he continued, has deducted only \$60 million spent on Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which the US says are an obstacle to peace.

The Jerusalem Post newspaper said Israel actually spent \$307 million in the Occupied Territories during the last financial year, but most of the money was spent on constructing bypass roads which the US does not take into account when making its deductions.

### Home alone

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu forgot to take his leading negotiator with the Palestinians, General Dan Shomron, to the Middle East peace summit in Washington.

The Israeli daily Yediot Aharanot reported yesterday that Netanyahu's plane was about to take off on Monday when his aides realised they had forgotten to invite Shomron. They made an urgent call to the general's home, telling him to catch the next commercial flight to Washington in time to attend the summit talks.

US President Bill Clinton announced yesterday that Palestinian and Israeli leaders had failed to settle their deep-rooted differences at a two-day Washington summit. But he said the two sides will step up peace talks beginning Sunday, with the issue of Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank city of Hebron as their first priority.

"Please, please give us a chance to make this thing work in the days ahead," said Clinton, in what The Associated Press described as a plaintive plea to the feuding Israelis and Palestinians, whose differences exploded last week in bloody violence.

The talks between Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu, had made some progress, he said, but not as much as he had hoped.

"The problems... are still there, the differences are still there, but I believe there is a higher level of understanding. They were not able to resolve their differences here, but to be fair, when we came together, there were no advance guarantees."

Officials said the main sticking point remained Israel's long overdue withdrawal from Hebron, home to 100,000 Arabs and fewer than 400 militant Jewish settlers and students. The Palestinians had demanded a date for the pull-out, but the Israelis insisted first that the redeployment plan be modified to improve security for the Jewish settlers.

"They are ready to renew and intensify negotiations on implementing the interim [Israeli-Palestinian peace] agreement with Hebron as their first priority," announced Clinton in what was billed as a "summary statement" on the summit's outcome.

"They are committed to engaging immediately in talks and to achieving tangible progress. To assist them in this effort, I am sending Dennis Ross, our special Middle East coordinator, to the region now. The very first meeting will take place on Sunday morning in Egypt."

Clinton spoke, Netanyahu, Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein sat grim-faced behind him. Clinton thanked all three leaders for attending the summit on short notice.

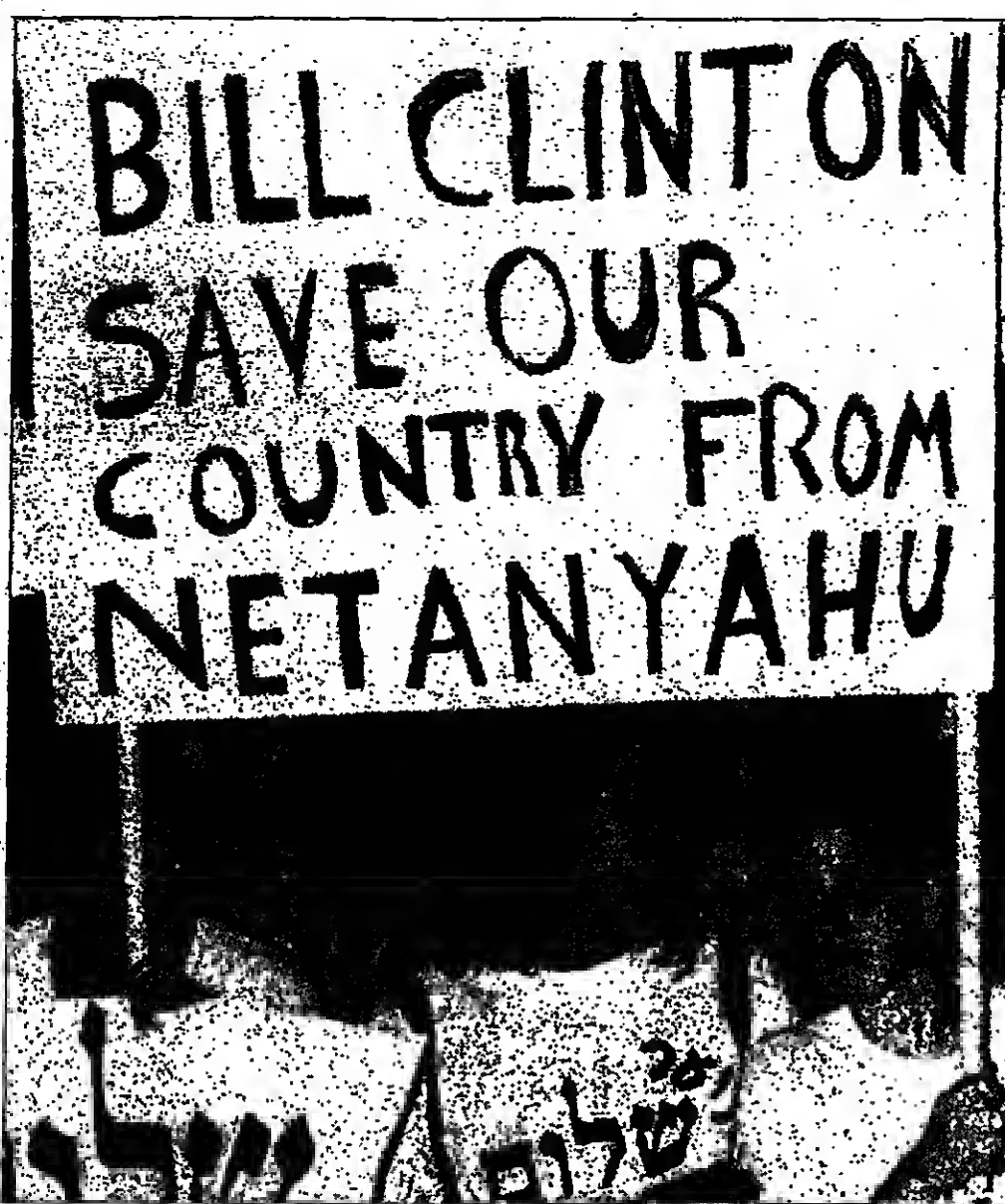
"Let's not overreact. We are in better shape than we were two days ago," Clinton said. If the turbulence had persisted, "imagine where we would be now."

The West Bank unrest which claimed more than 70 lives, mostly Palestinians, was triggered by Netanyahu's decision to open a tunnel near the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest shrine.

After working-level officials held intensive and tough negotiations through the night, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher met with the delegations for two and a half hours. Netanyahu, Arafat and Hussein then returned to the White House, for lunch before Clinton's closing news conference.

Israel hailed the summit as a victory but the Palestinians called it a failure.

"The results of the summit are a great success from the point of view of the government of Israel. All the demands we presented in the meetings and negotiations we've held night and day since coming here were accepted," Israeli cabinet secretary Danny Naveh told Israeli radio from Washington.



Some 20,000 Israelis marched in Tel Aviv on Tuesday to protest Netanyahu's anti-peace policies (photo AFP)

But Palestinian negotiator Hassan Asfour said in Jerusalem: "What happened in Washington was an American attempt to absorb the anger and reaction of Palestinians and to give the appearance of success. The summit has failed because of Israeli intransigence."

Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian and wounded five others in two incidents in the West Bank, Reuters reported.

A man was killed and four were wounded after they stoned Israeli cars at Sfir near Hebron. In a separate incident in the same area, troops shot and wounded a Palestinian policeman by accident.

The French news agency AFP said the Israeli army went on a war footing in the occupied Palestinian areas in anticipation of clashes between the two sides should the Washington negotiations fail.

It reported that Israeli tanks had encircled the six main Palestinian autonomous towns on the West Bank and thousands of troops reinforced had been deployed while combat helicopters stood ready for take-off. Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said the army was "ready for any eventuality."

"We are not preparing for war, but we have taken the necessary measures to face any eventuality," Mordechai told Israeli army radio.

Reuters said Palestinians stood in silent protest as Israelis marched through Jerusalem yesterday, both anxiously awaiting the outcome of the Washington summit.

Palestinian youths threw stones at Israeli soldiers in occupied Hebron when a curfew was

briefly lifted, but protests in the Israeli-blockaded West Bank and Gaza Strip were generally peaceful.

Traffic came to a halt for five minutes at noon in a protest called by Arafat's Palestinian Authority against Israel's closure of Palestinian-ruled areas since last week's gunbattles. Pedestrians also stopped to observe a moment of silence.

Thousands of Israelis and foreign Jews marched to the wailing wall for the Jewish feast of tabernacles, an annual religious pilgrimage which this year took on political overtones because of the unprecedented fighting. A steady stream went through the narrow entrance to the controversial archaeological tunnel beside the wall, whose opening had ignited Arab anger.

Hebron, a West Bank city holy to Muslims and Jews, was one of the hottest issues on the table at the Washington summit. Arafat insists Netanyahu honour his predecessor's pledge to redeploy troops in the city.

Soldiers briefly lifted a curfew in Hebron for Arabs to buy supplies. "The situation in Hebron is tragic. The city has been under curfew for the past seven days, which has paralysed life and turned it into a ghost town. The only people moving are the settlers," Mayor Mustafa Natsheh told Reuters. Any Palestinians that leave their homes "are detained and beaten by soldiers."

Palestinian-ruled cities are not under curfew but travel between them is virtually impossible because of an Israeli blockade. Israel has ringed them with tanks to quell violence if the Washington summit collapses.



### 'Clinton holds the key'

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak has held the United States responsible for removing the obstacles obstructing the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mubarak, who stayed away from a Washington summit arranged by President Bill Clinton to salvage the peace process, made his position known in remarks to reporters in Aswan yesterday and in statements published by Al-Difa'a, the Defence Ministry's monthly magazine.

"The key to the peace process is American President Bill Clinton," Mubarak told reporters after inaugurating a railway project in Aswan.

He elaborated on this view in an interview with Al-Difa'a: "For the success of the peace process, American policy should dot the i's and cross the t's." The United States, he said, had managed to bring the "brutal massacres" in Bosnia to an end by means of the Dayton peace agreement. "By the same token, America should bring an end to the differences that obstruct the peace process."

The principle of trading land for peace — which has been rejected by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — is, Mubarak stated, "no longer an option but an inevitability sanctioned by the world community. All parties should show commitment to this principle if they wish to realise a just and durable peace."

Noting that Egyptian security was indivisible from Arab security, Mubarak said that "the current situation requires the maximum possible level of Arab cooperation." He had earlier acknowledged that he was staying away from the Washington summit to show his displeasure with Netanyahu's policies.

Asked by reporters in Aswan whether he expected Clinton to put pressure on Netanyahu at the summit, Mubarak replied: "It is not a question of pressure... What is important is the preservation of peace in the region because peace is very important for all parties."

He expressed hope that the summit would produce "good results" and that Clinton would be "successful in his negotiations with the prime minister of Israel."

Netanyahu "had spoken well" on his visit to Cairo in July, he added, "but up to now, he hasn't done anything."

Mubarak said that Clinton had shown understanding over his decision to stay away from the summit, and described Egyptian-American relations as "very good."

"All that we do is for the good of the homeland and for the dignity of the people," Mubarak said. "We want stability for our region. We do not want wars; we want development... This is why we are intent on the achievement of peace."

## Cairo insists on actions

Presidential adviser Osama El-Baz warns, in an exclusive interview with Nevine Khalil, that Netanyahu's policies could revive the vicious circle of Palestinian-Israeli violence

An Egyptian demand that Benjamin Netanyahu announce timetables for honouring his peace commitments drove the Israeli prime minister to change his mind about attending a peace-saving summit in Cairo, says presidential adviser Osama El-Baz.

In an interview with Al-Ahram Weekly, El-Baz described Netanyahu's policies as a "combination of ideological rigidity and lack of experience." He warned that a continuation of these policies would lead to a revival of the vicious circle of violence in the region.

El-Baz recounted how Cairo stepped in to save the peace process following clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinians, triggered by the opening of a tunnel near the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

He said it was not true that Netanyahu had refused to come to Cairo, in response to an invitation by President Hosni Mubarak, for talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Mubarak issued the invitation after Netanyahu appealed to him in a telephone conversation to step in to calm the Palestinian revolt.

The Israelis "very much wanted" Egypt to hold the summit, but changed their minds after learning that Egypt was asking for "certain requirements in order to guarantee the success of the conference," El-Baz said.

Describing the Egyptian demands as "only natural," El-Baz said Egypt "wanted

Israel to accept timetables containing certain dates for the implementation of their obligations. We said that you [Israel] are under certain obligations, and in Cairo you must announce that you are committing yourself to carrying out these obligations."

Specifically, Egypt wanted Israel to "tell us exactly when you are going to honour these commitments, especially regarding redeployment in Hebron," and to stop "taking any steps in Jerusalem or elsewhere which violate the agreement or the spirit of peace, or the rights of Arabs, both Muslims and Christians."

El-Baz said Netanyahu was encouraged to change his mind after finding out that "the American administration was willing to host the meeting if Egypt declined to host it — that there was an alternative."

El-Baz warned that Netanyahu's policy would lead to more bloodshed. "We don't want to see the Palestinian police and the Israeli military shooting at each other because it would be catastrophic, and the vicious circle of violence would become intolerable," El-Baz said. "Our fear and suspicion is that unless the Israeli government changes its vision and moves towards the implementation of the agreements signed with the Palestinians, this will happen."

A revival of violence will also have an economic impact, El-Baz said. "The economic community [in Israel] is very un-

happy, many politicians and [ordinary] Israelis who have lived in the promise of beginning a new era of reconciliation are very, very concerned. Many of them are as apprehensive as we are," he said.

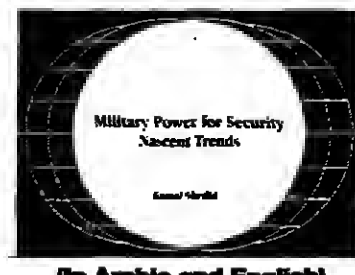
Asked about the impact of Netanyahu's policy on Egyptian-Israeli relations, El-Baz replied: "If the present Israeli policy continues unchanged, it is likely to produce a greater degree of strain, because you cannot create an 'artificial' improvement of relations. It is likely to antagonise public opinion in all the Arab countries, not only in Egypt."

Noting the deep divisions existing within Israel, El-Baz said that the "Arabs must address the Israeli people in a proper, honest and sincere way. We have to emphasise that we want peace and that peace dictates just and logical requirements, agreed upon by both parties in the past. We don't want to alter what has been agreed upon, all we want is a commitment that it will be implemented."

Asked whether the rejection of Netanyahu's policy by sections of the Israeli public could force his government to fall, El-Baz said: "Israeli public opinion can force the new Israeli government to change its course." Israel, he added, "cannot be pressured from abroad at all, it has to come from inside. What is important is that the government change its course, not [necessarily] that it falls."

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## Analysis

## No light at the end of the tunnel

Going to Washington, writes **Abdel-Moneim Said**, could have spelled disaster. Events since Sharm El-Sheikh have shown that this particular road to peace leads straight to a dead end

President Hosni Mubarak's decision not to attend the Washington Summit means only one thing: other heads of state, and particularly the US president, were unable to convince him that there is a light glimmering at the end of the Washington tunnel. Mubarak's well-known support for the peace process, his deep involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the risks he has taken to promote an Arab-Israeli settlement, and his commitment to keeping Egypt at the centre of events in the region, make it clear that his decision not to attend was based on the conclusion that Netanyahu and Clinton have neither the desire nor the will to deal with obstacles to peace in the Middle East.

Mubarak has no interest in participating in side-shows that may help Netanyahu show the Israelis that recent events will not prevent him from doing business as usual with Arab leaders. Nor is he interested in joining Clinton's election campaign. Had the messages and telephone calls made by both the US president and the Israeli prime minister during the past few days allowed Mubarak even to hope for substantive progress towards peace in the area, the situation may well have been different. In fact, only promises — and vague ones at that — were made.

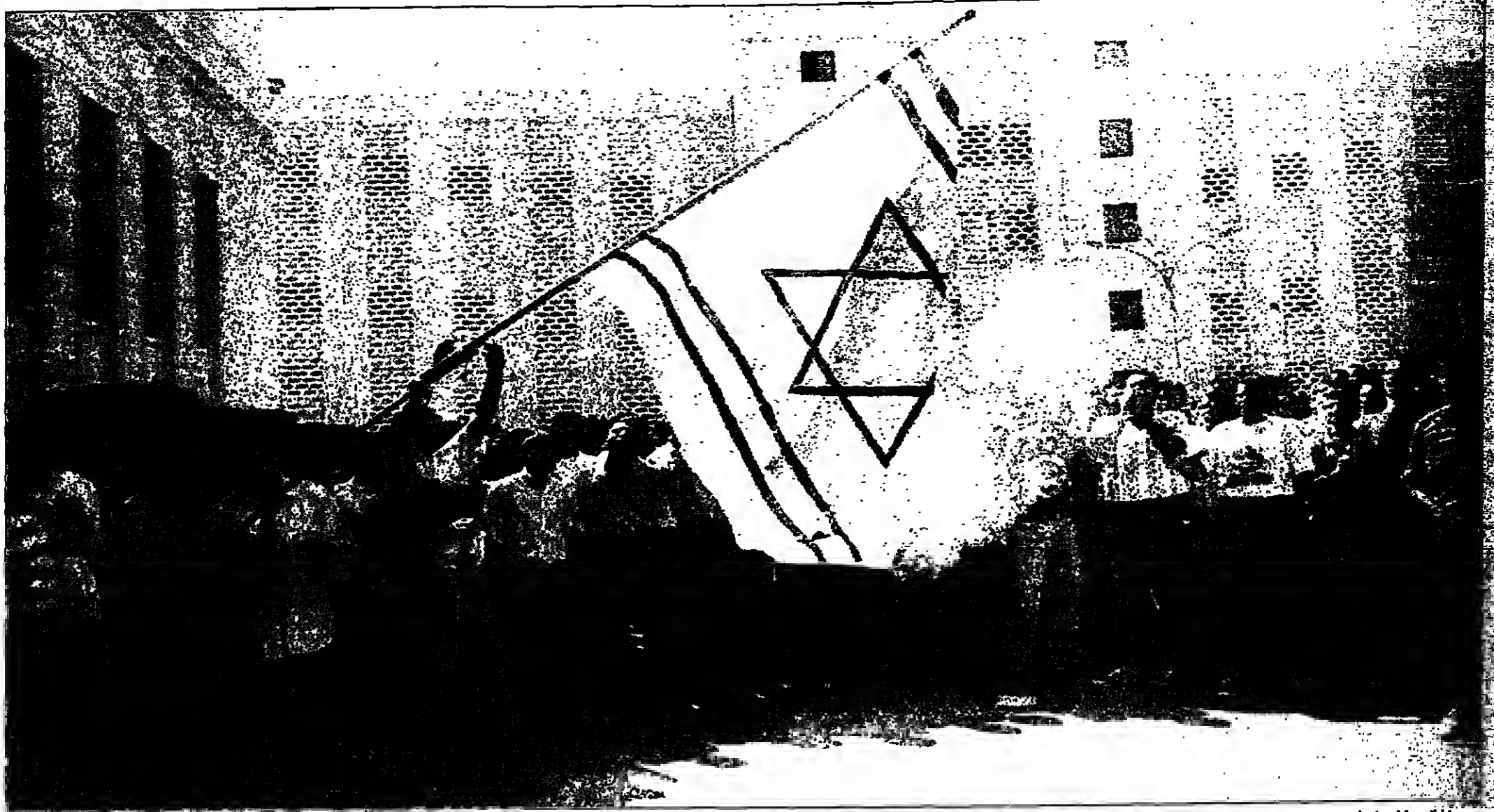
Recent events, as bloody as they have been, were only the tip of the iceberg. Bitterness at the Israeli and US approach to the entire peace process, which placed Israeli wishes (not necessarily interests) above the cause of peace in the region, runs deep and strong. Probably the aftermath of the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit was responsible for this disenchantment. In calling for this summit, Egypt made every effort to bring 14 Arab states to accept not only peace with Israel but also the possibility of cooperation within a regional framework to guarantee Israeli security. Israeli policy regarding the Palestinians and in Lebanon, and US support for this policy, however, have made it well-nigh impossible for Egypt to continue its efforts. The election of a right-wing government headed by a fanatic ideologue has made a reassessment of the peace process imperative. Netanyahu's sweeping declarations, trumpeted in both Israel and the US, have not made matters easier, and have given no credence to the argument that the new Israeli leader could be acting pragmatically in light of domestic and international constraints.

Cairo's decision, nonetheless, was to give him the benefit of the doubt. In Egypt, the emphasis has been placed on commitment to Israeli obligations under the Oslo Accords gave reason for comfort. Netanyahu's words, however, were not followed by deeds. Even his soft talk in Cairo was followed by harsh words of arrogance and intransigence. His series of negatives on the return of the Golan to Syria, a Palestinian state, Jerusalem, the withdrawal from Hebron, and other issues, soon made it clear that Netanyahu is not in the regional peace business. His goal, it is now abundantly clear, is Israeli hegemony, whereby the entire region will submit to Israel's projects, agenda, and policy. The US's stance, however, provokes even more anxiety, since it has failed to deliver on a process which it was committed to sponsoring. In fact, the Clinton administration seemed more interested in cosmetic moves, like the meeting between Arafat and Netanyahu, than in real progress on the ground. The US elections and the concomitant fury, has provided the Israeli premier with leverage that he intends to exploit to the full.

It would be myopic to presume that the Egyptian decision not to attend the Washington meeting is only related to the events that followed Israel's insistence on opening the tunnel connecting the Western Wall area to the Muslim quarter of old Jerusalem. The decision extends far beyond the tunnel incident, as important and sensitive as the latter is. It stems from the Egyptian conclusion that the Netanyahu government is doing nothing to fulfil its Oslo obligations concerning Hebron, further redeployment, and final status. Meanwhile, the Egyptian government is by now quite aware that Israel is building new settlements and squeezing Palestinians out of Jerusalem.

Mubarak could not participate in a summit unless he was guaranteed an outcome that would put the peace process back on track. This guarantee was not offered. Mubarak was faced with a difficult choice. He could attend and come back with yet more proclamations of good will and schedules of more meetings. But this message would not be well received in Egypt or the rest of the Arab world, especially after the Arabs closed their ranks last June in Cairo. Then again, Mubarak could attend and risk a confrontation that would weaken havoc at the conference and deepen the existing rift in Egyptian-US relations. Finally, he could opt not to attend at all, thus minimising friction with Washington while facilitating more serious attempts to rescue peace in the region. In choosing the last option, Mubarak made it clear to Israel and the US that Egypt must not be taken for granted while peace and Arab and Palestinian interests must be taken more seriously.

The writer is the director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.



Cairo University students demonstrate on campus and burn the Israeli flag during protests this week. Israeli intransigence rekindled anti-Israeli sentiments despite 17 years of peace

photo: Magdi Hanna

## A matter of dignity

In a two-hour meeting on Monday, President Hosni Mubarak persuaded Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to attend a summit in Washington, arranged by President Bill Clinton in an attempt to salvage the Middle East peace process. But Mubarak himself decided to stay at home. Explaining his decision, he told reporters on Tuesday: "We are not pleased by the statements and the obstinate stand of Israel concerning the Palestinians."

The emergency summit was called by Clinton following four days of clashes last week between the Palestinians and Israelis, which left 70 dead and hundreds injured. The violence was sparked by Israel's opening of an underground passage near the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Clinton's invitations went out to Jordan's King Hussein, Mubarak, Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Alluding to Netanyahu's determination to keep the tunnel open, Mubarak said the prime minister's statements were "discouraging" and "defied public opinion in the Arab, Muslim, and Christian worlds". Mubarak also disapproved of Netanyahu's agenda for the summit, namely an end to the violence: "I say that violence and terrorism will never come to an end unless the peace process moves forward," he said. The other item on Netanyahu's agenda was relaunching the frozen negotiations. "I ask, what kind of negotiations and negotiating what?"

Mubarak rejected Netanyahu's declaration that the Oslo Accords need to be renegotiated to accommodate Israel's security requirements. Any negotiations, Mubarak insisted, should grapple with final status issues like settlements, borders and Jerusalem.

Mubarak said he had made his "excuses" to Clinton on the eve of the summit. "I told him I am ready to help in any way, without being present in this situation."

Earlier, Mubarak had cited Egyptian public opinion, angered by Israeli violence against Palestinians and Netanyahu's disrespect for his Arab neighbours, as another reason for his absence from Washington.

Egyptians and other Arabs were impressed by Mubarak's decision, seeing it as a demonstration of Arab national pride. Mubarak, however, made it clear that there were no hard feelings between Cairo

and Washington, whose annual assistance to Egypt amounts to \$2.1 billion. "We have very good relations with the US and President Clinton," Mubarak declared. "He understands our position."

Egypt expressed appreciation for Clinton's intervention to salvage the peace process at such a sensitive time — five weeks before the American presidential election — especially as the outcome of his mediation is so uncertain. "President Clinton is doing his best although he is busy with his campaign," Mubarak said. "[He] is a very able and sincere man and I hope he will succeed."

Mubarak said he wished for a "satisfactory [result] with all my heart" at the four-way summit.

Reports on Monday's meeting between Mubarak and Arafat in Alexandria suggested that the Palestinian leader was reluctant to travel to Washington without Mubarak. Arafat had argued that an Egyptian presence was needed to counter-balance the US, Israel's main ally. Mubarak stuck to his guns, but told reporters it was necessary for Arafat to attend "to fight through negotiations and explain to the public that if the peace process doesn't move forward, it will be a disaster."

In an interview with the Israeli *Maariv* newspaper published on Tuesday, Mubarak said that he had talked Arafat into attending the summit, arguing that even if he came under pressure during the meeting he would still be "acting for the good of [his] people." Mubarak described peace as "so precious that it is worth any sacrifice."

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said Arafat had to attend "to say 'yes' when necessary and 'no' when he has to say no." Moussa doubted that the summit was a "winning card" for the US administration, and American officials too were cautious not to jump the gun. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said that "miracles" should not be expected. "This is an emergency situation," Christopher added that the peace process was in "jeopardy" and the current situation "is probably the worst threat it has faced."

But White House spokesman Mike McCurry said the US was expecting results. "We are not here to make a lot of joyful statements about peace in the Middle East. We are here to do some very hard work," he said on the first day of the summit.

Mubarak stressed that other "alternatives" could be pursued if the Washington summit failed. The

Egyptian leader had tried to arrange a summit in Cairo last weekend but his chief political adviser, Osama El-Baz, denied that Egypt was upset over the change of venue. "The venue is not important. The important thing is the conference and the results," he said. He also denied earlier reports that Mubarak had made his presence at the summit conditional on the closure of the controversial Jerusalem tunnel. "Our only concern is for the peace process to produce tangible, concrete results on the ground," El-Baz said.

Israel had apparently refused to attend a Cairo summit. Instead, said Arafat's top aide Nabil Abu Rudeina last Saturday, "The Israelis are offering a bilateral meeting at Erez," a border post between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said on Tuesday that holding the summit in Cairo would have exposed Israel to pressure. "Therefore, we preferred to hold it in Washington." And Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh said on Sunday: "The government of Israel welcomes [President Clinton's] initiative to call the parties to come to Washington. This was our aim."

Netanyahu travelled to Washington on Monday. King Hussein had arrived a few hours ahead of him. Jordan, which, like Egypt, is bound to Israel by a peace treaty, blamed Israel for the crisis in the peace process and warned that it was expecting real progress from the meeting. "We want concrete results on the ground and not just photos of summit participants," Information Minister Marwan Moasher said on Monday.

Before leaving Cairo on Monday, Arafat said that "the most important thing is how to implement accurately and honestly what has been agreed upon." In an interview a day earlier, Arafat demanded the closure of the tunnel and a timetable for implementing the autonomy accords. Before heading for Washington, he said: "I'm not asking for the moon."

The unscheduled summit, the second encounter between Arafat and Netanyahu, did not schedule a tête-à-tête between the two, and officials in Washington said that getting the two to sit together was an accomplishment in itself. The did sit privately over lunch on the first day, but if the summit fails violence will continue, and it is obvious that the second Intifada has already begun.

As the peace process went into deep crisis, Washington organised an emergency summit, but Cairo stunned the world by deciding to stay away. Nevine Khalil reports on the Egyptian position and the week's developments

## Egyptians fall under Israeli bullets

A RESIDENT of a Palestinian camp situated on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing point with Israel told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that Israeli Apache helicopters fired a tirade of bullets on rioting Palestinians who crossed into Egypt during last week's clashes. One Egyptian officer and a Palestinian boy were killed as a result of the attack and another Egyptian soldier was injured.

"The little boy was about 500 metres from the wire fence when he was shot," said the Palestinian, who requested anonymity. "We had to dive for cover or we would have all been killed."

According to the camp resident, helicopter attacks began on Thursday morning, and continued through Friday night. Palestinian policemen came to rescue the Palestinians, drawing heavier Israeli fire, he told. On Thursday, Israeli soldiers chasing protesters attempted to tear down the barbed wire fence erected on the borders between the two countries, he added.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian-Israeli Military Coordinating Committee, formed under the 1979 peace treaty to ensure stability on the Egypt-Israel border, met on Saturday evening to discuss ways of complying with international laws relating to borders. Talks also focused on security measures.

Egyptian officials told the *Weekly* that Israel had proffered assurances that it "would never even think of harming any Egyptian".

As tension wound down, camp residents reported that calm has prevailed along the border area since the beginning of the week. Israeli authorities repaired the barbed wire fence, and built concrete walls to surround checkpoints on its side of the border.

Egyptians erupted in fury against the opening of the Jerusalem tunnel and Israel's suppression of the Palestinians. Shaden Shehab reviews reactions

## ...and solidarity

Demonstrations and sit-in strikes, fiery speeches, scathing editorials and cartoons — this was how Egypt demonstrated its anger at Benjamin Netanyahu's opening of a tunnel near Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Egyptians' fury was fuelled still further by Israel's subsequent brutal suppression of Palestinian protesters. Such is the current climate that President Hosni Mubarak acknowledged that his absence from the Middle East summit in Washington, was, to some extent, a response to public opinion.

As political parties, professional syndicates and national and opposition newspapers tore Netanyahu to shreds, university students staged on-campus demonstrations. Appeals were made to halt the normalisation of relations with Israel and even for launching a *jihad*.

In a joint statement last Thursday, opposition parties denounced what they described as a "Zionist plot targeting Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as the suppression and massacre of the Palestinians." The statement said that "what is taking place on the usurped land of Palestine came as no surprise to the Arab and Islamic nation."

The statement accused Israel of renouncing its commitments under the Oslo Accords with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

"The Zionist enemy considers that using bullets and weapons against the unarmed

Palestinians who had taken to the streets to protest the Zionist attacks against Al-Aqsa Mosque, is the only language for dealing with the Arabs... It is a language to which we should respond by mobilising our capabilities and taking a stand in order to regain the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the Muslim holy shrines," the statement said.

And now that Israel's intentions are clear, Arab and Islamic governments should "reconsider their stand, honestly and seriously, on what has been called the peace process." The Arab states should prepare for a confrontation, the state-

ment added.

In a separate statement, the leftist Tagammu Party praised President Mubarak's decision to stay away from the Washington Summit as a "step in the right direction." This step, the party said, should be followed by additional measures, mainly a "freeze" of all normalisation agreements with Israel and postponing the Middle East/North Africa Economic conference, scheduled to be held in Cairo in November.

The party said that diplomatic and economic pressures should be put on Israel until it shows commitment to the basics of a just and comprehensive peace.

Mosque preachers, led by Al-Azhar's Sheikh Sayed Tantawi, also denounced the Israeli actions and urged Muslims to unite in opposing them. "When we see Jews inflicting harm on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, then Muslims across the world should unite to defend it, even if this means that many of them will get killed. This is life, a struggle between right and wrong," Tantawi said.

Muslims should provide the Palestinians with all they need, whether money or weapons, and mosque preachers should mobilise the public. Tantawi said. Thousands of worshippers at Al-Azhar offered prayers for the Palestinian "martyrs" last Friday and then attempted to march out of the mosque in an anti-Israel demonstration.

Pope Shenoudah III, head of the Orthodox Coptic Church, told a rally at the Doctors' Syndicate on Monday that the Jerusalem tunnel "is not just a tunnel, but an Israeli attempt to get rid of Al-Aqsa Mosque altogether." The Israeli actions, he said, "hurt the feelings of all of us, not only the feelings of Muslims."

Shenoudah said that Arab armies should be strengthened "and some sort of action should be taken to force Israel to show respect for the Arabs." Unity is the Arabs' strong weapon, he added.

The Doctors' Syndicate condemned the opening of the tunnel as a "criminal attack" on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and also denounced the "ruthless massacre" of the Palestinian people. In a

statement, the syndicate urged Arab governments to "stop all forms of normalisation" of relations with Israel and to boycott the November economic summit.

Students at Cairo University marched around campus throughout the week, shouting anti-Israeli slogans and calling for revenge. They also burned an Israeli flag.

At a campus rally, students of the Faculty of Commerce invited volunteers to join a *jihad* [holy war] to defend the holy sites and urged the cancellation of the economic summit and the breaking off of relations with Israel.

Gamal Badawi, editor of the opposition newspaper *Al-Wafd*, urging an Egyptian boycott of the Washington Summit, wrote that it would "place Egypt in a position of bargaining with a war criminal [Netanyahu] who is torpedoing the peace process and pushing the region to the threshold of war." He described Netanyahu as a "secondhand" who should not be trusted.

"We gave him a chance to alter his ugly image when he came to Cairo, but he sold us hollow words and lies and then returned to continue his destructive policies and pursue his plans to eliminate the Palestinians," Badawi wrote. "So, why should we put our hand in a hand that is covered with blood? What is the use of mediation now that the peace process has reached a dead end?"

In a separate editorial, Badawi praised the Palestinian people for their "courageous stand" and urged them to keep fighting the Israelis. "Palestinian people, now you know your way. Go ahead and pursue your goal of freedom, dignity and humanity. Don't listen to the whispers of those who are subjugated and humiliated. They have deceived you... Peace is only a cover-up for humiliation. Do not throw away your weapons, since weapons are your only way of survival."

A cartoon in an Arabic-language newspaper shows Netanyahu's adviser telling the prime minister: "They [the Egyptians] notified that you have been upset by the nickname Netan Yahu [the rotten one], so they have chosen another name for you. Efen Yahu [the stinking one]."

## IAA head received in Cairo



Nabil Osman, head of the Information Authority, with Norman Vale, IAA Director, New York

Nabil Osman, head of the Public Information Authority, received Norman Vale, IAA director in New York, who arrived in Cairo to review the arrangements taken for holding the 36th IAA Congress in Cairo in 1998.

The three-day conference will be held under the auspices of President Hosni Mubarak.

Adel Affi, president of the IAA, Egyptian Chapter, and general manager of the Advertising Department and board member of Al-Ahram, attended the meeting.

Al-Ahram Establishment is the organiser of the 1998 congress.

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## The road to October

23 years ago, Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal, destroyed the "impregnable" Bar Lev line, and opened the way for the liberation of Sinai. Galal Nasser attends an anniversary seminar analysing the preparations for the October War, and its consequences

Political and military experts, speaking at a Defence Ministry seminar, recounted how the October 1973 War shattered the Israeli theory of their nation's impregnability and opened the way for a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel six years later. The seminar marked the 23rd anniversary of what the late President Anwar El-Sadat pledged would be the last war between the two countries.

Military historian Maj. Gen. [ret'd] Gamal Hammad said that, following the defeat of 1967, Egypt's politico-military objective was defined as "liquidating the consequences of the aggression" or liberating the Occupied Territories by force. According to Hammad, the late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser had determined that this target should be achieved within three or four years.

In pursuit of this objective, the armed forces were rebuilt during a "phase of steadfastness" which continued until August 1968 and included the battle of Ras Al-Esh in July 1967 and the sinking of the Israeli destroyer Eilat in October of the same year. This was followed by a six-month phase of "active defence", which continued until February 1969 and featured night-time commando raids across the Suez Canal — limited in number and scope. The war of attrition broke out afterwards — a series of small-scale strikes and counter-strikes by Egyptian and Israeli forces, which "amounted to a real war along, and behind, the confrontation line," particularly after the two sides began using their air forces. This war continued until a cease fire was arranged as a result of American mediation in August 1970, Hammad said.

He argued that the war of attrition was necessary, both to maintain the state of military tension and to put pressure on Israel, which stood to suffer human and material losses. The biggest challenge to Egypt was Israel's decision in July 1969 to bring its air force into the war, which was followed by Israeli air attacks on the Abu Zaabal factory and Bahi Al-Baqar school, both in the Nile Delta. But even these Israeli actions led indirectly to positive results, Hammad said, because the Soviet Union was then persuaded to provide Egypt with anti-aircraft missiles which were installed west of the Suez Canal.

According to Maj. Gen. Abdel-Sattar Amin [ret'd], an adviser to the prime minister, one of the undeclared objectives of the war of attrition was to put pressure on the Soviet Union to provide Egypt with advanced weaponry. "The only way to show Soviet leaders the deficiencies of Egypt's planes and air defence equipment was to put them to the test against the American-made Israeli arsenal," Amin said. Even so, Moscow did not provide Egypt with advanced SAM missiles until Nasser threatened to resign and hand over power to "someone who could deal with the Americans," he added.

Amin argued that Nasser's post-1967 policy ran counter to that of the Soviet Union's. While Nasser believed that "what was taken by force would only be regained by force," the Soviets, fearing that another Middle East war could lead to a confrontation between the two super-powers, preferred to try for a peaceful settlement.

Preparations for the 1973 war, involving not just the armed forces but the entire nation, began immediately after the 1967 defeat, said Maj. Gen. [ret'd] Hassan El-Gredli, a former director of military operations. However, taking the decision to go to war was a major challenge. He told the seminar that the decision was taken at the end of 1972 after political efforts to secure an Israeli withdrawal ended in failure.

A decision also had to be made on the shape the war would take. Excluding a revival of the war of attrition, the political leadership opted for a "united war, in the form of a strong blow coming from more than one Arab front, to realise limited strategic objectives." And in order to defeat an Israeli strategy that relied on blitz action, that war had to continue for as long as possible, El-Gredli said. The war's political objective was to "break the political stalemate, end the state of no-war, no-peace and alter the strategic balance in the Middle East by creating political conditions that were conducive to the effective use of all Arab resources."

Coordination with Syria was a basic factor in making preparations for this war, El-Gredli added.

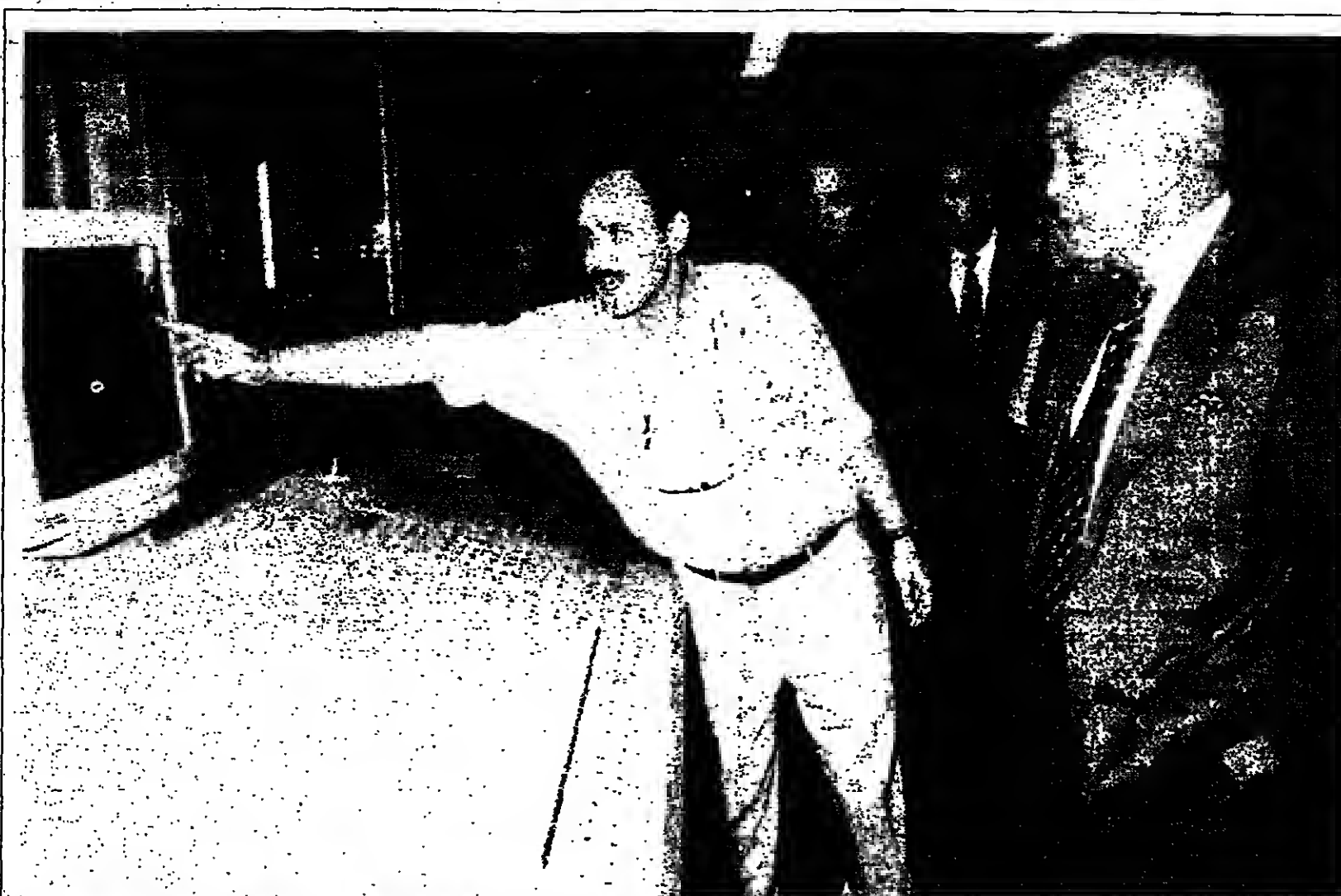
Presidential adviser Osama El-Baz recounted how politicians had taken over from the military following the war, and began negotiations that culminated with the signing of the 1979 peace treaty. According to El-Baz, the 1973 war not only shattered the Israeli theory of security but had also dealt a fatal blow to the myth of Israeli superiority.

Before the war, the Arabs were aligned to the Soviet Union, and Israel to the USA. But to make the war possible, the Egyptian political leadership expelled the Soviet military advisers. "Therefore, it can be said that one of the most important results of the October War was that it ended the polarisation of the region," El-Baz said. This was coupled with the emergence of the Americans as the principal mediators in the peace process launched after the war ended, he added.

The war also led both the Arabs and Israel to change their concept of peace. "Israel began to realise the importance of peaceful co-existence with the Arabs," said El-Baz. "And the Arabs, who had previously held a narrow view of peace as the termination of belligerence, also acquired a new understanding of peace as a state that includes a network of relations and interests which negate the need for further war."

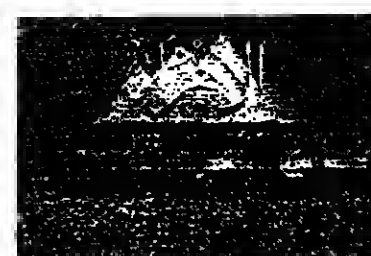
Future peace efforts were to stall, however, as a result of obstacles created by Israel and by inter-Arab differences. The situation remained deadlocked until President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, which, El-Baz said, "altered the situation radically and made capital of the 1973 war."

According to El-Baz, the Egyptian objective was to reach a collective Arab peace with Israel, proof of which was that a seat was reserved for the Palestinians at the Mena House talks of December 1977 in Cairo. But the Palestinians failed to attend.



Nafie (right) looks on as Taymour Hassib, general manager of Al-Ahram's print shop, explains some high-tech features

photos: Mohamed El-Qi



IN READINESS for the ceremony inaugurating its new, state-of-the-art print shop in 6 October City, Chairman of the Board and Editor-in-Chief Ibrahim Nafie this week inspected the "giant" presses, 43-km south west of Cairo, along the Fayoum road.

Hailed by Al-Ahram Organisation as its "gateway to the 21st century", the new print shop is fully automated, featuring the latest in printing technology to be found anywhere in the world.

The new presses, with a capacity to churn out 80,000 newspapers every 20 minutes, have already had a soft opening. Issues of the Al-Ahram daily, printed at the 6 October presses, have been distributed at newsstands for some weeks.

The new print shop will feature a printing museum, including a still-operating 87-year-old, British-made, printing machine.

## Cairo's 'not a catering service'

President Hosni Mubarak's decision to decline Bill Clinton's invitation to a Washington summit had the world media buzzing with speculation. The president's chief political adviser Osama El-Baz spoke to **Nevine Khalil** about his view of the current situation



photos: Mohamed El-Qi

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said after the announcement of the four-way Washington Summit that Israel had refused Egypt as a venue for Israelis and Palestinians to meet.

It is not true that Israel refused to come to Cairo. The Israelis wanted very much for Egypt to host the summit, but they [retreated] after learning that Egypt is asking for certain requirements in order to guarantee the success of the conference. It's only natural that if you host a meeting you want certain indications it will be successful, because you are not 'catering service'. This is a political meeting — otherwise, there is no point.

We wanted Israel to accept timetables containing certain dates for the implementation of their obligations. We said: 'You are under certain obligations and in Cairo you must announce that you are committing yourself to carry out these obligations. What is required of you is to tell us when exactly you are going to honour these commitments, especially regarding redeployment in Hebron, Areas B and C and (to stop) taking any steps in Jerusalem or elsewhere which violate the agreements or the spirit of peace or the rights of the Arabs, both Muslims and Christians.'

The second factor was that they found out that the American administration was willing to host the meeting in case Egypt declined to do so, that there was an alternative.

What is your view of Israel's policies under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and of the situation inside Israel?

The Israeli leadership has to realise that its policies are not going to work because no Arab is going to accept them or tolerate them, and that they cannot impose them on the Arabs. Any statesman cannot maintain this view, while seeing that the only thing it will lead to is bloodshed. Israel itself is suffering and the economic impact of this is going to be felt. The economic community is very unhappy. Many politicians and [average] Israelis who have lived in the promise of a new era of reconciliation are very, very concerned. Many of them are as apprehensive as we are.

How can we tap into the peace-seeking force building up among the Israelis?

The Arabs must address the Israeli people in a proper, honest and sincere way. We have to emphasise that we want peace and that peace dictates just and logical requirements, agreed upon by both parties in the past. We don't want to alter what has been agreed upon; all we want is a commitment that it will be implemented.

It would be a mistake for the Arabs to think of Israel as a monolithic structure, that all [Israelis] are the same because there are deep divisions inside Israel. Arabs should also make it plain to Jewish communities abroad that the present line

of policy adopted by the Israeli government is not working and it is very dangerous.

Can this accumulated rejection among Israelis cause Netanyahu's government to fall?

Israeli public opinion can force the new Israeli government to change its course because Israel cannot be pressured from abroad at all; it has to come from inside. What's important is that the government changes its course, not [necessarily] that it falls.

Would you describe Netanyahu's actions as political naïveté or plain hawkish hooligan?

It is a combination of ideological rigidity, a hard-line [policy] which is expressed in certain logical terms from their point of view, and a lack of experience. It's not a question of political naïveté, but a matter of not knowing how far things can go, what can work and what can't. He does not know the limitations of the power of a single party; he believes that by holding steadfast to his view, no one can change it.

What bargaining chips do the Arabs hold in the face of Netanyahu's obstinacy?

The Arabs have the option of not accepting his policy. Whatever steps are taken by the Israeli government in such a direction should be rejected. Part of this rejection is legal and political like registering objections in the United Nations and another part is on the ground when steps are taken to alter the status quo, like settlement expansions. This can be [physically] confronted, which creates a lot of friction and the Israeli general public will realise the dangers involved in [Israel's] new policy.

President Mubarak said that the next Intifada will be more than stone throwing. Can you elaborate?

President Mubarak was expressing his fears and misgivings. It was proven beyond doubt from past experience that frustration, hopelessness and despair lead to the use of certain degrees of force. The degree of force available and known to the Palestinians is the Intifada in different forms.

In the early days, they resorted to the mere throwing of stones and then retreating. Later, they used stones [and stood their ground] to confront the Israelis. It became a confrontation rather than a protest. Now the Israelis complain that the Palestinian police joined in the [recent] Intifada. We don't want to see the Palestinian police and the Israeli military shooting at each other because it would be catastrophic, and the vicious circle of violence would become intolerable.

Our fear and suspicion is that unless the Israeli government changes its vision and moves towards the implementation of the agreements signed with the Palestinians, this will happen.

How would you evaluate Egyptian-Israeli re-

lations currently, especially after weeks of tensions and hostile statements from both capitals? If the present Israeli policy continues unchanged, it is likely to produce a greater degree of strain because you cannot create an 'artificial' improvement of relations. It is likely to antagonise public opinion in all Arab countries, not only in Egypt.

You cannot talk about the policy of any country in a vacuum because it is influenced by public opinion. Public opinion here weighs heavily on the government and President Mubarak believes in a responsive government.

As President Mubarak said, Egypt's public opinion was against Egypt's participation in the Washington summit, so he didn't go. If Israeli policies are rejected and heavily criticised by Egyptian public opinion, then the Egyptian government cannot proceed in a different direction. The government is not going to swim against the [tide] of public opinion.

What is your evaluation of the Washington conference and your expectations from it?

We sympathise with the Americans and we know they meant well, but unfortunately, given the objective factors that exist, one cannot foresee any tangible and meaningful result. The US administration tried to bring the Palestinian and Israeli leadership together to find a minimum of common ground in an attempt to move the peace process, but it is obvious that the US cannot force this on the new Israeli government.

We hope that they could deliver, but all indications point to the fact that these hopes are not justified.

The Americans believe that the summit will produce a new momentum for peace and an Israeli commitment to sit down and negotiate continuously with the Palestinians.

What are the targets of the third Middle East/North Africa Conference (MENA III) scheduled in November?

Basically, our target is attracting the maximum foreign investment possible to the region and Egypt, which is an important country in the Middle East and where the outlook for economic growth is great.

Another target is to pave the way for regional cooperation and inter-state cooperation, not between governments but business communities. The ideal situation would be that all regional powers would cooperate in projects benefiting the entire region, like an electricity grid linked with Europe.

If the atmosphere is gloomy and tense and the participants' perception

The recent Israeli atrocities in the Occupied Territories prompted an Egyptian-Palestinian walkout of a regional conference on tourism in Tunis, forcing a cancellation of the meeting. **Rehab Saad** reports

## Protest walkout crashes conference

A meeting of the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association (MEMTTA) was cancelled shortly after it opened in Tunis earlier this week when the Palestinian delegation walked out and the Egyptians followed suit in solidarity. The Palestinians said they were withdrawing, as soon as the association's board of governors met, to protest the Israeli clampdown on their countrymen in the occupied territories.

"The Egyptian delegation also walked out in protest of the Israeli atrocities. In light of the withdrawal by two main countries, the meeting was cancelled by Cyprus, chair of the council of governors," said Nabila El-Khodari, under-secretary at the Ministry of Tourism and head of the Egyptian delegation.

The board of governors includes governmental tourist bodies from Egypt, Jordan, Cyprus, Turkey, Palestine, Tunisia and Israel. The association's charter lists four main countries: Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Jordan, and states that meetings are illegal if any of them is absent.

"MEMTTA is a Middle East tourist organisation. How can we imagine any kind of cooperation in the tourist field without peace in the region? Who dares come to the area?" El-Khodari asked the board of governors in explaining Egypt's withdrawal.

She added that Egypt was the regional "peace pioneer" and a strong supporter of MEMTTA and its objectives, but the atmosphere in the region was not conducive to communication among the member countries.

The Egyptians who walked out were both government officials and private entrepreneurs. "The executive council, which consists of private sector representatives from the participating countries, started its work a day before the tunnel was opened in Jerusalem. We prepared an agenda to be submitted to the board of governors. When the Egyptians on the board withdrew, however, we took action to support them," said Ezzeddin El-Shabrawi, a tourism entrepreneur and head of the executive council. He said the primary target of the executive

council is to market the region jointly. "But how can there be joint marketing by countries locked in conflict?" he asked.

Tourism and peace are inter-related, declared Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Egypt's minister of tourism, adding that stability and security are essential if tourism is to flourish. "This stability will remain unattainable unless there is a just peace, based on the principle of trading land for peace and respect for all agreements signed between governments, both past and present," he said.

MEMTTA became the regional coordinating body for travel and tourism for the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, Gulf states and North Africa at the Azman economic summit in October 1995. At the time, its charter was signed by Egypt, Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Morocco, Turkey and Tunisia.

The association is considered the first regional economic body to emerge from the Middle East peace process. Its primary target is to increase travel to and within the region and to develop tourism industries in member countries.



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## Restricting emergency powers

**Awad El-Morr,**  
Chief Justice of the  
Supreme Constitutional  
Court, examines the operation  
of emergency laws



Article 147 of the Constitution was framed with the intention of enabling the president to deal with critical situations, arising in the absence of the People's Assembly, which necessitate his taking prompt measures that have the force of law [decree-law]. In Case No. 28 for the second judicial year, decided on the 4 May, 1985 the constitutional issue addressed to the court was the invalidity of or otherwise of decree-law No. 44 (1979) amending Law No. 25 (1929) concerning personal status, upon allegations that the enactment of that decree-law was not rooted in powers legally delegated to the president, thus contravening Article 108 of the Constitution. In addition, the petitioners claimed, the state of emergency referred to in Article 147 of the Constitution — in respect of which the president has the power to intervene by decisions having the force of law — has not been established.

In deciding this case, the court held the opinion that the questioned decree-law was void, basing its argument on the following considerations:

• Constitutional provisions demarcate the norms upon which the regime of governance is founded. Being superior to other rules of mandatory character, all legislation must adhere thereto. In addition, constitutional limitations delineate not only the 'original' functions mainly attributed to every branch of the government, but also other derogative functions of 'exceptional nature' allocated thereto. The latter assignments are so qualified in view of their departure from the general rule by which powers ascribed to every governmental branch must be aligned with its normal activities, with the consequence that exceptional mandates of the executive are exhaustively enumerated, cautiously defined, and narrowly formulated in order to require their prudent and restrained application.

In principle, the power to legislate in all domains, is the omnipotence of the People's Assembly as provided for by Article 86 of the Constitution. However, in consequence of the eventual emergence of compelling situations which may arise in the absence of parliament, the Constitution exceptionally conferred on the president the power to legislate with a view to meeting such crucial situations requiring prompt and indispensable measures. In shaping Article 147 of the Constitution, the framers were perceptive not to allow the transformation of an exceptional privilege into an absolute right. To this end, a balance has been struck between the exigencies of the principle of the separation of powers on the one hand, and the practical need to face drastic situations which had arisen in the absence of the ordinary legislature on the other hand. In line with the dimensions of this conceived balance, Article 147 of the Constitution was drafted, stating:

Para one:  
"Where in the absence of the People's Assembly, a situation occurs necessitating the taking of prompt measures which cannot endure retardation, the president shall accordingly take decisions having the force of law."

Para two:  
"These decisions must be submitted to the People's Assembly within fifteen days following their issuance if the Assembly is standing, and on its first meeting if being dissolved or its sessions suspended. Where the respective decisions are not submitted thereto, their force of law shall *ipso facto* and *ab initio* be withheld without rendering a decision to this effect. If disapproved after being submitted to the Assembly, their adductive force of law shall be waived with retroactive effect, unless the Assembly sanctions their efficacy during the previous period, or otherwise adjust the effects resulting therefrom."

• The exceptional nature of the president's privilege under this article, has been ascertained by its rigid requirements. Indeed, limitations on the exercise of this power are two-fold: firstly by demanding the exercise of the exceptional privilege in the absence of the People's Assembly, and secondly by linking its exercise with the occurrence of threatening situations exacting the taking of unavoidable measures. Evidently, the court affirmed, observance or neglect of such limitations, shall fall within its exclusive power of judicial review which shall also embrace the submission of the respective presidential decisions to the People's Assembly, either for approval or for the adjustment of their effects.

• According to the explanatory note of the challenged decree-law No. 44 (1979) which amended both law No. 25 (1920) and Law No. 25 (1939) concerning certain provisions on personal status, more than 50 years had passed since the adoption of these laws, during which period societal values sustained dramatic material and moral changes which initiated new concepts and patterns of conduct. With this in view, the note claimed, standing legal family relationships have proven to be incomplete or inadequate, thus burdening the judiciary with the problem of meeting the dominant current changes with an evolving standard of judicial relief adaptive to Islamic law.

In addition in what the explanatory note portrayed the state-minister for the affairs of the People's Assembly claimed that immemorial time had elapsed since 1905, and that henceforth all efforts to restructure family laws had dramatically failed, with the consequence that both Law No. 25 (1902) and Law 25 (1929) governing family affairs remained unchanged. Had the challenged decree not been enacted in due time by the president, he said, the People's Assembly would have taken years to introduce the required amendments. Failure to behave in response to these pressing societal needs, demonstrates, in his opinion, a state of emergency in respect of which a "revolutionary" decision has to be taken.

• The above clarifications advanced by that minister were branded by the court as being misleading, erroneous, inconclusive and way behind meeting the constitutional requirements set forth in this regard. Elaborating on this point, the court asserted that seeking to amend long-standing family relationships, is far from being a drastic situation calling for intervention with exceptional emergency powers.

• Indeed, the completion of lacuna in a legal system along with the introduction of new legal norms carrying with claimed social changes are attributes of the discretionary power of the legislature as part of its strive to bring about consistency and harmonised features in the legal edifice. Bearing this in mind, the challenged decree — which has no relevance to the existence of a state of emergency and its stringent requirements under Article 147 of the Constitution — is to be held void. Added to this is the legal proposition that the adoption by the People's Assembly of that decree-law after its submission thereto, does not mean its incorporation into the category of laws ordinarily enacted by that Assembly, nor does it imply that constitutional contraventions which that decree had embraced have been rectified, but simply denotes sustenance of its acquired force of law.

Fouad Hegazi is a civil servant, a 58-year-old married man with grown children. To his friends, he is also a hero. An ex-soldier, he was captured by the Israeli army in 1967 and taken to the notorious Atid prisoner-of-war camp, where he survived a regime of torture and brutality which killed many of his comrades.

"Faces and hands covered with dark blood. Dry blood clots across dismembered bodies. Broken ribs. Faces of captured soldiers contorted with the struggle to keep on breathing." These are Hegazi's vivid memories of his nine-month period of captivity in the Atid camp.

With a fixed stare, awkward gestures and occasional nervous laughter, Hegazi told his story to veteran cinema actress Nadia Lutfi for a film being made by Osama Khalil of the Legal Rights Research Centre (LRRRC) to document the testimony of POWs who survived this and other camps. In his house in the Nile Delta town of Mansoura, Hegazi relived the memories "that have never really become memories, because they have never left my mind."

"The Israelis loaded us onto a garbage truck. The stench was awful. No one could imagine how disgusting it was. And the way they loaded us: one on top of the other just like garbage. The humiliation was enormous."

And so was the pain. Over 150 Egyptian POWs were crammed into each truck, many of them wounded and some unable to move because of serious injuries.

There was worse to come. The Israelis wanted to know if there were any Pal-

estianians amongst Hegazi's fellow prisoners.

"In my group there were no Palestinians. But the Israelis did not believe it. So they forced us to lie on the ground and ordered two tanks to drive towards us. They told us that if we did not identify the Palestinians, they would order the tanks to drive on."

In Hegazi's case, the tanks stopped just in time. "But it was only at the last moment, when the tanks were less than an inch away from us that their commander ordered them to stop. It was terrifying," he said.

Hosni Abdel-Hadi, another POW, was driven to the Atid camp in a different garbage truck. The Israeli officer in charge of Abdel-Hadi's group also resorted to the "tank technique," except that this time the tanks did not stop. "There were about a hundred of us on the ground. Each tank rolled over three prisoners and flattened them to the ground. It was only then that the Israeli commander told them to stop," Abdel-Hadi remembered.

Both Hegazi's and Abdel-Hadi's groups were then taken to a train and loaded into freight cars. "There were no windows in the carriage. Nothing but air. It was like being buried alive," said Abdel-Hadi.

"It was impossible to move. There were bodies underneath me and bodies on top of me. As the lack of oxygen started to take its toll on us, we scratched the carriage's wooden wall and managed to carve a little hole that brought us some air," Hegazi recalled.

Looking at the train, Abdel-Hadi had a

foretaste of the suffering that lay ahead.

"I tried to make the Israeli commander kill me. But he kept on telling me: Egyptian, you want to die. I know you want to die and, therefore, I am not going to kill you," he said.

Arrival at the camp after the hours-long train journey provided another opportunity for Israeli brutality. "There was a big ditch full of prickly cacti. They threw us into the ditch and ordered us to run across it. The thorns tore at our bodies and we bled profusely," remembered Abdel-Hadi. Having gone for days with no water, food, or medical care the wounded POWs were in a terrible state when they arrived at the Atid camp.

"Our wounds were agony. I am talking about people seeing worms coming out of their injured arms," Hegazi recalled. "We were also terribly filthy. Our bodies were covered with lice."

Egyptian POWs were given hardly any food or water. "They gave us only the minimum to keep us alive, so that they could go on torturing us," said Abdel-Hadi.

A man who asked for water was sure not to get it. The Israelis, other ex-POWs testified, would bring the water and spill it on the ground, rather than give it to the prisoners.

Lack of toilet facilities was another chronic problem. More often than not, the POWs had to defecate in their own cells. Conditions in Atid only began to improve after the Red Cross came to the camp.

The former prisoners gave more than four hours of testimony to Nadia Lutfi.

"It is so sad that we have to make people relive these memories, when they suffered terribly in defend our country," she said. "It is painful for every one of us that our heroes and soldiers had to be subjected to this brutal torture by the enemy. But we have to do it. We have to record their testimony for the world to know."

Hegazi, Abdel-Hadi and other ex-prisoners do not find talking about Israeli atrocities as upsetting as thinking that their stories might go unheard or that people might forget what they view as the true nature of Israeli society. "They are a war-like tribe. They have no mercy and no humanity," said Hegazi. "As I follow the news of the revival of the Intifada in the last few days, I feel that it is the right thing to do. The Israelis don't care for peace. They just don't."

Khalil and Lutfi started filming this week. They are planning to visit other governorates and meet with more former POWs who were taken by the Israelis in the wars of 1956 and 1967, as well as the families of missing soldiers.

"We are having a bit of a problem finding enough people, especially those who fought in the 1956 War," said Khalil. He is contacting all potential sources, and plans to put an advertisement in the newspapers to encourage people to contact him. Khalil and Lutfi hope to complete their documentary by the beginning of January.

News of the extent of torture and killing in Israeli prisoner of war camps began to unfold a few months ago when Michael Bar-Zohar, a retired Israeli official and an army veteran, told the Isra-

li media that he had witnessed two Israeli army cooks stab to death three Egyptian prisoners during the 1967 War. Other Israeli officials, who served in either of both wars, also admitted that many Egyptian POWs were shot after capture on the grounds that the Israelis did not have enough guards to escort them.

"Of course many Egyptian soldiers were killed in Israeli prisoner of war camps," said lawyer Magda Fathi. Fathi was approached by the families of some missing soldiers to file a lawsuit against the Israeli government. "We are talking about soldiers who were reported as being taken prisoner by the Israelis and who never came back," she said.

Fathi believes that it is the Egyptian government's duty to pursue these families' claims for compensation from the Israeli government. "But unfortunately our government does not seem to be interested," she said.

Concerned state officials have said that Egypt should only resort to taking Israel to the International Court of Justice if diplomatic efforts to make it conduct a proper investigation and pay due compensation were to fail.

After much pressure from Egypt, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres had appointed a retired general to investigate the atrocities, before he lost the parliamentary elections last May.

But there is no indication that Peres' successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, is planning to forge ahead with the inquiry.

The LRRRC hopes that when its documentary is finished, it will be shown at professional syndicates to prompt the government to act.

## Brothers divided

Dissent within the Muslim Brotherhood has led to the resignation of 13 members, the largest exodus in the history of the outlawed group. **Amira Howaldy reports**

Thirteen members of the banned Muslim Brotherhood, including three would-be founders of the Wasat (Centre) Party, widely seen as a potential front for the Brotherhood, have resigned in the largest walkout in the organisation's 68-year history. While members have left the group in the past, this is the first time the Brotherhood has witnessed resignations en masse. The three Wasat members decided to quit in response to pressures from the organisation's leaders, others resigned to show their displeasure with machinations in the Brotherhood's upper echelons.

The group's leaders deny that such a large number has decided to quit and only admit to two resignations — Abul-Elza Madi, Wasat's leading representative, and Essam Sultan, a lawyer.

But informed sources told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, that "at least 13" had walked out and more were likely to follow in the near future. The resignations came two months after the Supreme Military Court acquitted six members of the group, including Madi and two more of Wasat's would-be founders, on charges of belonging to an illegal organisation.

Ma'moun El-Hodeibi, deputy to the group's Supreme Guide, is said to have pressured Brotherhood members involved with the Wasat to withdraw. Twenty out of a total of 74 gave in to pressure. According to the Political Parties Law, a group seeking to establish a political party must number at least 50.

Led by Madi, who is assistant secretary-general of the Engineers' Syndicate, Wasat's would-be founders had applied to the Political Parties Committee on 10 January. But the committee, a quasi-governmental body charged with licensing political groups seeking official party status, turned down their application. While Madi was awaiting trial in jail, his deputy, Rafiq Habib, appealed the committee's decision with the Political Parties Tribunal. The appeal will be heard on 14 December.

"No one can imagine the amount of pressure that was put on us," said one of those who resigned. "It went on day and night, in violation of all the traditions and regulations of the group. We were confronted with two options: either get fired or to leave the Brotherhood. We chose the latter."

This source, who was a leading Brotherhood member, said the problems began, "but were contained," after Hodeibi was informed of their bid to establish the Wasat Party. When they were turned down by the Political Parties Committee, Hodeibi insisted that no appeal should be made.

According to the source, Hodeibi sent a message to Madi, as he awaited trial in jail, asking him to "stop at this point." When Madi refused, Hodeibi decided to fight back, pressuring other would-be founders to disassociate themselves from the Wasat.

However, both Hodeibi and Supreme Guide Mustafa Mashhour deny that they were involved in any of this. "No one was pressured, no one resigned, except Madi and Sultan," Mashhour told the *Weekly*. "We did not practise any coercion. Those who want to resign can do so and those who want to remain are most welcome." And Hodeibi commented: "We don't know anything about resignations."

Sultan points out that the reasons for the resignations go beyond the conflict over the Wasat. The death of the group's supreme guide, Hamed Abul-

Nasr, last January brought into the open problems related to the sanctity of the Brotherhood's leaders authority, which have been dormant for years.

According to Sultan, Hodeibi surprised all those in attendance at Abul-Nasr's funeral by announcing that Mashhour was the only one worthy of succeeding him and that "we have chosen him."

Hodeibi's declaration violated the Brotherhood's regulations for the selection of the supreme guide. Sultan said. "The group's Shura Council should meet and elect the supreme guide. Then, the group's international branches must be contacted to get their approval. If there is no consensus, the process is repeated all over again. If the candidate gets two thirds of the vote this time, he is the new supreme guide."

Sultan claimed that Hodeibi ignored these regulations. "He told some members that the Shura Council had elected Mashhour, then he told others that the council was in the process of meeting, but he also said that everything was being done in accordance with the regulations, which in the event of 'exceptional security circum-

stances' permit the General Guidance Bureau to choose the supreme guide," Sultan said.

There was no need for all this, Sultan added, because Mashhour was going to be elected anyway. But Hodeibi's action "angered many members of the Brotherhood, even the old guard." Then came the Wasat crisis, which, Sultan said, was the "straw that broke the camel's back."

Following the resignations, speculation was rife about the future of the Wasat and the Brotherhood. To Sultan, the Wasat "is more than a project for a political party. It is a conviction. Our aim is to activate the domestic political forces, including the Brotherhood. The resignations may shake the leadership up a bit, but this would be a good thing."

For veteran Islamist lawyer Kamal Abul-Magd, himself a former member of the Brotherhood, the situation inside the organisation is "vague." He explained: "The group is outlawed. It does not operate publicly. We only know the names of its leaders which are published in the newspapers. So it is difficult to evaluate how the resignations will affect the group."



## Calamity on the Nile

A one-person funeral in southern Egypt turned into a nightmare for the mourners

Over 40 persons died, 9 were reported missing and 19 people survived when a ferry capsized in the Nile River in the southern province of El-Minya last week, writes Hanaan Sabra.

The craft, travelling from the village of Timei on the river's east bank to Beni Hassan on the opposite side, was carrying mourners returning from a funeral. Despite alleged protests from the skipper, they crowded onto the boat causing it to capsize and sink, about 220 kilometres south of Cairo.

Frogmen and police rescue teams co-operated in removing the dead from the river. Police sources said, "11 people remain missing. Attempts to raise the craft have so far failed."

One of the survivors, Mohamed Khalifa, criticised the skipper saying, "When we arrived at the craft I noticed that we were too many. I warned the skipper but his answer was, 'this is my job, do you know better than me?'"

The villagers expressed their disgust with the situation. One said, "We asked years ago for more boats to be added. There were only two transporting people from 20 villages."

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri granted each of the families of the victims LE3,000 for funeral expenses and Minya's governor, Mansour Essawi, ordered new ferries to be bought immediately.

Hassan Abdel-Latif, mayor of Abu Qorqas, Minya, ran a check on all the licences of boats working in the Nile to ensure their validity. He said, "The local administrative unit cannot operate boats, as this is a privatised industry, but we will do what we can to assist the villagers."

The captain of the ferry, Mohamed Ahmed Mounir, was charged with manslaughter, driving without a valid licence (the license expired on 12 September) and making a cargo craft to carry passengers. He is being held for 45 days in prison until the investigation is completed.

Chief swept through the village. One woman ran to the river to find her son's body. She cupped the water in her face and cried, "I can sense his presence in the water!" Unfortunately there appeared to be little or no chance that he survived.



photos: Khaled El-Fiqi

## Tense countdown to trade union elections

Mona El-Nahas reviews the preparations for trade union elections scheduled to begin in mid-October

This week around 500,000 trade unionists representing more than 2,000 companies and work sites have been heading for the different departments of the Ministry of Manpower to submit their nomination papers for the October trade union elections. Today is the deadline for receiving the nominees' papers. The elections, scheduled to begin on 15 October, will be held at the workplace over a period of nearly three weeks. Candidates are expected to start campaigning next Tuesday, with promises to protect workers' rights in the event that the enterprise employing them is sold. Election results will be announced immediately after the voting.

The ballots will decide board seats for a new five-year term in the union committees at work sites. Workers will also be running in another set of elections for places on companies' boards of directors. Workers have the right to occupy two of the board's five seats.

Subsequently, on 16 November, workers will compete for seats on the boards of Egypt's 23 trade unions. Ten days later, elections will be held to decide who sits on the board of the General Federation of Trade Unions.

Human rights groups and workers' representatives in the opposition parties claim that the government is trying to keep out trade union activists. Workers who stand firmly against the sale of public sector companies and those who have certain political leanings will be excluded, according to a report prepared by the Legal Aid Centre for Human Rights, after receiving several complaints from workers. "Obstacles are put in the way of these people to prevent them from completing the nomination procedures. For example, unions sometimes deny them membership cards," the report said. Government officials say these allegations are lies, asserting that labour elections will be completely fair.

According to Abdel-Hamid El-Sheikh, a member of the workers' secretariat in the leftist Tassam Party, the problem lies in a trade union law issued in 1976. "The law and its amendments, which were introduced in 1981 and 1995, do much to undermine union members' rights," he said. "More than 20 articles in the law give the Ministry of Manpower the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the trade unions, including elections, violating in this way principles of the international labour conventions Egypt signed."

El-Sheikh does not think the trade union elections will be fair. "The government's main aim is to keep all trade unions in its grip," he said. "The only way to achieve this is to bring in representatives who obey the state's policies blindly

and serve its interests."

Keda El-Bitar of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party said, "The coming period requires independent trade union leaders, capable of protecting workers' rights. We do not need those elements who take the side of the administration just to fulfil personal ambitions."

Mohamed Munir, a member of the committee which will supervise the elections, denies the existence of any kind of government intervention in the electoral process. "No worker will be deprived of the right to nominate himself regardless of his political ideology so long as he has completed all the measures necessary for nomination," he said, adding that the role of the Manpower Ministry will be limited to the technical supervision of the elections.

The election supervisory committee was formed by a decree passed last month by Minister of Manpower Ahmed El-Ammawi. The committee, with its various branches, will be responsible for supervising nomination procedures and ratifying election results. Each branch committee will be headed by a judge, nominated by the minister of justice, and will include representatives from both the Manpower Ministry and the General Federation of Trade Unions.

Munir said that elections would be delayed in 36 companies whose boards of directors had been dissolved until immediately after new boards have been formed.

There have been complaints from workers and trade union heads about time-wasting bureaucracy in the nomination procedures. According to a decree recently passed by El-Sayed Rashed, chairman of the General Federation of Trade Unions, a nominee's union membership card, one of the documents which must be enclosed with the nomination papers, has to be signed at the headquarters of the general federation and bear its official seal. Membership cards obtained from branch trade unions are not being accepted.

Ibrahim El-Azhari, chairman of the General Union for Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industries, anticipates that the upcoming elections will be hotly contested. He said that the role of his union ended after it gave all the nominees their membership cards. "We did not put any kind of pressure on any nominee, whatever his political trend," he stressed. Asked about the necessary qualifications for a workers' representative, El-Azhari replied: "The nominee should enjoy wide popularity and a good reputation among workers. He should also be aware of the requirements of the coming period."



## Dreaming of Dahshur

THE ANCIENT Necropolis of Dahshur, one of the most important in Egypt, situated to the north of Saqqara and off-limits to the public for much of this century, was officially opened last week by Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni, reports Nevine El-Aref.

The site of two famous pyramids located 40km south of Cairo, Dahshur is now open to tourists for the first time since it was turned into an army base in 1956.

The ancient archaeological site has recently seen the construction of paved access roads and special entrance and exit gates. Other conveniences such as parking areas, a cafeteria and public toilets have been provided for tourists. The pyramids have undergone renovations and a new lighting system now shines on the wonders.

Tourists may wander inside the Red Pyramid, the oldest pyramid built by Senefru and the only one visitors may enter. A limestone staircase leads up to the pyramid's entrance. Meanwhile, its interior walls have been freshly cleaned and new lighting and ventilation systems have been installed.

The Bent Pyramid, also built by Senefru, and other pyramids which date back to the Middle Kingdom, will be inaugurated after restoration work is complete.

Culture Minister Hosni said at the opening ceremony, "No buildings will be erected for a good distance around the site. We have agreed upon that with the military."

## Books in the battle

In a ceremony marking the end of the Reading-for-all Festival, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak was awarded a certificate of merit from the Egyptian Federation of Publishers. Rania Khallaf reports

Mrs Suzanne Mubarak was the recipient of a certificate of merit for her efforts on behalf of the Family Library project at a ceremony at the Cairo Library in Zamalek. The project, a year-round concern initiated by Mrs Mubarak, is an essential part of the festival, which takes place annually from July through the end of September.

The chairman of the General Egyptian Book Organisation, Samir Sarhan, in a closing address in honour of Mrs Mubarak said that "The Family Library is the fruit of your enormous effort and shows the sincerity of your contributions to your country and your strong belief that without a revolution in culture there is no certain future for our country. The project has elevated the awareness of young people of their literary heritage."

The number of volumes released in the Family Library series since the project was inaugurated three years ago has reached 30 million. In the last year alone, 127 titles totalling 18 million volumes have been published by the General Egyptian Book Organisation, the body responsible for the Family Library series.

"The positive side of the project is that it includes rare literary works as well as collections of writings from the new generation, many of whom were granted the opportunity to publish their books for the first time," Sarhan added. "The project has engaged in a fierce battle against the currents of backwardness and extremism which are aimed at dragging the country into the ages of darkness," Sarhan concluded. Ibrahim El-Moslem, chairman of the Egyptian Publishing Federa-



tion commented that the Reading-for-all Festival has played an important role in cultural stability at a time when the number of books being published in the Arab world is diminishing.

In her speech, Mrs Mubarak said that the success achieved by the series is a real cultural revolution in the framework of the movement towards enlightenment in society.

On behalf of the authors who contributed to this year's series, writer Lutfi El-Kholi, said that the project has helped to encourage radical

changes in the educational system as it rekindled an interest in young people to search for knowledge and to develop their creative skills.

Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, unable to attend the festival, sent a letter to the organising committee expressing his gratitude for the project for its influence on the cultural development of the mind of the nation. Mahfouz, hailing the initiative of Mrs Mubarak in turning her dream into a reality, has decided to publish his latest collection of short stories in the series of the Family Library.

## LE35 million to save Hanging Church

The government is launching an ambitious scheme to restore the Hanging Church in Old Cairo, but allocated funds may fall short. Sherine Nasr reports

Following years of bungled repair work, the government is to launch a major scheme for the restoration of the Hanging Church in Old Cairo. Culture Minister Farouk Hosni announced last Friday that LE35 million has been allocated for the project, and work should begin within a few weeks on the church, whose walls and floors have been decaying as a result of rising subterranean water.

The Hanging Church was built in the 4th century AD, on the spot where, according to legend, the Holy Family stayed during their flight into Egypt. Various additions and renovations have since been made to the ancient structure.

On a rare visit to the church, Hosni said that an assessment of the work required would be completed in two weeks and restoration would begin soon afterwards. Repairs will also be made to the Roman fortress on which the church is constructed, as well as the ancient part of the Coptic Museum, adjacent to the northern section of the church.

The LE35 million allocated to the project by the Supreme Council of Antiquities have made it "perhaps the most expensive, salvage project to take place," according to Hosni. But Monir Sadek, director of the Egyptian Human Rights Centre for Consolidation of National Unity, said that as much as LE100 million may be needed to restore the church fully.

Hosni, accompanied by Ali Hassan, the new head of the SCA, met with worshippers following a Friday mass and assured them that "this is our national heritage and it is our responsibility to preserve it." Explaining the delay in launching the required repairs, Hosni said: "I only wanted to make sure that the restoration will be carried out on a sound scientific basis that will bring to an end the church's chronic problems."

A previous restoration plan, assigned to an Italian company, ended in failure two years ago "because of the lack of an accurate study and clear criteria determining the basis on which the company would operate," Hosni said. "It is only wise to take our time and not be hasty about undertaking more restoration that might later prove to cause the church more harm than good."

He described the Hanging Church as an "architectural masterpiece that includes incredibly beautiful icons and frescoes," and made it clear that they would be included in the restoration plan. "I will also make sure that top restorers, both Egyptian and foreign, will be in charge," he added.

The SCA has assigned the Archaeological Engineering Centre (AEC) at Cairo University to conduct the preparatory study. According to the centre's director, Taha Abdallah, the underground

water which is causing the decay of the church's walls and floor is a problem affecting the whole area. "Underground water is the principal problem facing not only the Hanging Church but all the monuments in Old Cairo," Abdallah said. The water, he explained, comes from the nearby district of Ain Al-Sira, about a kilometre away. The ground level there is higher than that of the church, "so the water glides naturally towards the Hanging Church area."

Any permanent solution to the problem will have to start from Ain Al-Sira. According to Abdallah, the Subterranean Water Research Institute has suggested digging several wells through which water could be pumped out. "This may prove to be an excellent solution which will salvage the church along with all the monuments of Fustat and Old Cairo," he said. But he stressed that "it is vital to handle it very carefully. Otherwise, the foundations of the fortress could be shaken and the church threatened with collapse."

Serious mistakes in the previous restoration work, carried out in 1980, caused additional harm to the church's structure. "In an attempt to consolidate the structure, additional walls were constructed on top of the decaying fortress, thus putting tremendous pressure on it. Parts of the floor also collapsed and the restorers used wooden scaffolding, which has been in place ever since, to support the floor," said Father Morqos Aziz, the church pastor. The scaffolding, he said, should have been a temporary not a permanent solution, and the subterranean water is now causing the scaffolding to decay.

The near-fatal mistakes of that restoration plan were exposed by the 1992 earthquake. The walls cracked and almost split away from the floor, parts of which caved in. This critical condition prompted Father Morqos to initiate legal action against the government, hoping that a court order would force it to launch new restoration work. "The case is still pending before the administrative court," Sadek said.

A second problem Abdallah identified was that the foundations and walls of the church are seriously cracked. "The AEC is studying the various options for repairing the church's structure," he said. "We are trying to determine the most appropriate and the cheapest way to do it."

While Sadek believes that expenses are "likely to leap to LE100 million," he is confident of the success of restoration this time around. "I have no doubt about the seriousness of the project," he said, adding that UNESCO and other international groups were ready to help if additional funds were needed.



## Former official denies abuse of authority

An investigation is under way to determine whether Abdel-Halim Nouredin and 18 other antiquities officials illegally appropriated archaeological land near Marsa Matrouh. Nevine El-Aref reports

A report by the Administrative Control Authority (ACA) accuses Abdel-Halim Nouredin, former chief of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), and 18 other SCA officials of abusing their influence to appropriate archaeological land along the Mediterranean coastline near Marsa Matrouh.

But the charge is hotly denied by Nouredin, who was dismissed by Culture Minister Farouk Hosni from the post of SCA secretary-general last month for undeclared reasons. Nouredin has gone back to his original position as head of the Pharaonic Antiquities Department at Cairo University's Faculty of Archaeology.

The ACA report charges that Nouredin and the SCA officials set up an association that illegally appropriated 18 faddans of land in Hammamat Cleopatra, an area that is said to be rich in Ptolemaic antiquities. They allegedly planned to build condominium villas and chalets on this land for themselves and other SCA employees.

The report, which has been passed on to prosecution authorities, presumably for further investigation, states that six years ago the SCA refused to grant permission to a petroleum company to extend pipelines through the area on the grounds that it is an archaeological zone.

But in 1994, the SCA under Nouredin's supervision, reversed its position, declaring the area outside the scope of its responsibility because excavations at the site proved that it contains no antiquities. The SCA officials followed up this decision with the establishment of the condominium association earlier this year, and the ACA report reached the conclusion that the two moves were made to serve the interests of the SCA staff.

Nouredin denied any wrong-doing. "This is absolutely not true," he said, referring to the charges contained in the ACA report. "I dare anyone to prove that, during my term in office, I allowed any SCA staff member to get away with illegally appropriating an inch of archaeological land."

The former antiquities chief said that he was not bothered by the fact the ACA report had been passed on to prosecution authorities, adding that "in fact I am happy. I am an honest man. Let us wait until the judiciary say their word."

Nouredin said that Gomaa Abdel-Fattah, head of the Marsa Matrouh city council, had denied that the governorate received a request or a decision to set aside a plot of land for the condominium association.

Shawki Nakhla, head of the restoration department at the SCA and a member of the condominium association, saw nothing wrong in setting up this association. "By law, any Egyptian citizen has the right to establish or join a condominium association as long as it follows the rules," Nakhla said. He explained that the association's contract did not specify the exact location of the land on which the condominium buildings would be constructed, but vaguely referred to an area that extends all the way from Marsa Matrouh to Salloum on the Libyan border.

Aziza Said, head of the archaeological section at the Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, and a member of the association, also denied the charge. She said she was using an Arabic-language newspaper, which publicised the accusation, for libel.

Sherif El-Sayed, a lawyer, said that even if the accusations against Nouredin and the SCA officials were true, the case against them would be "administrative and not criminal." He said the "criminal conditions" are lacking, but Nouredin and the other officials could be accused of administrative irregularities.

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## Alexandria, why?

The festival of the Alexandrias of the world turned out to be a big fiasco, because of lack of promotion, organisation and funding. Rehab Saad reports from the Mediterranean city

Sometimes good intentions are not enough. The festival of the Alexandrias of the world, designed as a week of celebration to promote Egypt's Alexandria, ended as a miserable failure which ground to a premature halt due to a lack of money, publicity and organisation.

Representatives of the city's many namesakes from around the world had been invited to join a programme which began with a grand opening ceremony at the Alexandria Stadium, continued with fashion shows, international music contests, and a gala dinner in the Antoniadis Gardens, and culminated in a performance of Verdi's *Otello* at the medieval Qaitbey Fort overlooking the Mediterranean.

It did not take long for the organisers' high hopes to be shattered. After the opening ceremony, there was a single performance of *Otello* and a concert by Egyptian singers Amshuk and Maged El-Masri, before the festival was aborted — three days ahead of schedule.

Alexandria '96 was organised by the governorate of Alexandria, financed by a private producer and sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism. Taking part were 20 Alexandrias from countries across the world, including the United States, Greece, Italy, South Africa, Pakistan, Turkey, the Ukraine and Brazil.

The opening ceremony itself did not bode well. Only 80 tickets were sold for what had been billed as a grand event, and to salvage something of the situation the governorate of Alexandria was forced to open the stadium's doors to the public for free admission.

The same problem recurred with the opening of *Otello*. Again only 80 tickets were sold and the remainder, around 4,000, had to be distributed as free invitations. Worse, the stage sets had not been finished, which meant that Desdemona had to meet her doom on the floor and not in bed.

A second performance for diplomats was cut short after the first act — which was staged without lights, sets, microphones or choir. The disgruntled performers complained to the audience from the stage that they had not been paid for their work and walked off before performing the second act.

Festival guests blamed the fiasco on lack of marketing and organisation. "This is a catastrophe; this is disgusting," said Basil Marco of the Peruvian Embassy. Although the opera and

the setting were spectacular, the event had not been properly advertised, he said. "Promotion was lacking. A lot of money was spent in vain. Such a big event should have attracted thousands of people from all over the world."

An Australian journalist blamed inadequate preparations. "I hadn't heard about this event until I received an invitation from the Ministry of Tourism," he said. "It needed proper promotion, of the kind given to *Aida* when it was performed in Luxor in 1994."

Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagui put the blame for the entire fiasco squarely at the door of the Alexandria Governorate. The festival was entirely its responsibility, he said. The ministry had only become involved once the decision to hold the festival had been made and plans were under way.

"A festival was going to be held in Alexandria, including an international opera performance. We had to use the event for the benefit of Alexandria and Egypt as a whole," he explained.

Beltagui blamed financial problems for the failure of the festival — problems which the governorate should have foreseen. He said that when the idea was first floated several months ago, the ministry had made inquiries about the producer, an Egyptian resident in Austria. "Our Vienna office informed us that he was facing some [financial] difficulties, but, nevertheless, the governorate of Alexandria gave him the go-ahead," the minister said.

"I believe that the producer's financial burdens were too great. The contract he signed with the governorate stated that he would invite the mayors of all the cities of Alexandria throughout the world at his own expense. He was also responsible for financing all the cultural events, starting with the opening ceremony and ending with the closing ceremony. In my opinion, only the opera performance should have been his responsibility. Expenses for the rest of the events should have been covered by the governorate."

Beltagui counselled that "in the future the financial and marketing abilities of producers should be carefully examined in advance."

Officials at the Alexandria Governorate were not available for comment.

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

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# The storm breaks

As the Palestinian uprising occupies centre stage in world events and the international community focuses its attention on the whys and wherefores of the sudden unleashing of anger, *Al-Ahram Weekly* reports on the unfolding of events from the West Bank and Gaza, sounds out the views of three leading Palestinian opinion makers and interviews Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Hussein, two key Palestinian players in the peace process



## 'A picture of war'

The relative calm which has followed this week's carnage in the West Bank and Gaza is only a lull in the storm, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

After four days of violence claimed the lives of 60 Palestinians and 15 Israelis, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are quietly awaiting the outcome of the quadripartite summit in Washington, convened in a last-ditch effort by the Clinton administration to salvage something from the debris of what was the Oslo peace process. The fighting, for now, has stopped. But the calm should fool no one.

On 29 September, the Israeli army imposed "internal closure" throughout the Occupied Territories, confining 2.5 million Palestinians to their eight "autonomous" areas by means of tanks, helicopter gunships and armoured personnel carriers. On the same day — under orders from President Yasser Arafat — Palestinian police carefully but firmly reined in their enraged people, barring them from approaching the army positions which now encircle the enclaves. It was a wise move. The army has expressed instructions to shoot on sight any Palestinian who nears its checkpoints. "It's calm," said a Palestinian United Nations

official, "as in after and before a storm."

The storm that raged across the Occupied Territories last week was caused by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to open a new exit for a 488-metre tunnel in Jerusalem's old city, occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. The tunnel has been under construction since 1968 and runs beside the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa compound — which is also the Wailing Wall, the Jews' holiest site — under the old city's Muslim quarter, before emerging onto the Via Dolorosa, the route taken by Christ to Calvary. Officials from the Waqf (religious endowments) Organisation and Palestinian archaeologists say the tunnel has already caused structural damage to several historic buildings in Muslim and Christian Jerusalem. Netanyahu says the tunnel's extension will improve business "for Jews and Arabs alike."

But the real point is symbolic. Coming at a time of absolute stasis in the peace process — and after Israel had forced Arafat to close down Palestinian Authority (PA)

offices in Jerusalem — Palestinians viewed the tunnel's opening as another ploy by Israel to alter the political and religious character of Jerusalem, ahead of Oslo's final-status negotiations over the city. "It was the straw that broke the camel's back," said Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member for Jerusalem, Zayed Abu Zayed. It was a sentiment shared by his leader. "We cannot tolerate the Judaisation of the city; Jerusalem is our capital which Israel occupied in 1967," said Yasser Arafat on 25 September.

But this time the PLO leader didn't just rail against Israel's "violations of the [Oslo] agreement." Under pressure from PLC members as well as activists in his own Fatah movement, Arafat called on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to protest. He didn't spell out how they should protest. After 29 years of occupation and seven years of Intifada, he didn't need to.

Over the next three days, demonstrations led by PLC and PLO representatives such

as Faisal Hussein and Hanan Ashrawi converged on the tunnel, in rising protest that erupted in major clashes with Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa compound after prayers last Friday, leaving three Palestinians dead and over 100 injured. But the real fire was in the Occupied Territories.

On 25 September — with the blessing of the PNA and Fatah — several busloads of Palestinian students from Ramallah, en route to Jerusalem, confronted an Israeli checkpoint. The army repulsed them with tear gas and rubber bullets. The students threw stones and Molotov cocktails. The PNA police did nothing. It was an incendiary mix that could not hold. Caught between their obligation under Oslo to maintain "public order" among the Palestinians and the Israeli army's firing on unarmed people, the police threw in their lot with the people. They returned fire, turning what had been an Intifada-style demonstration into a full-fledged gun battle.

It was a pattern of organised protest fol-

lowed by spontaneous — but armed — hostilities that spread, the next day, throughout the Occupied Territories. In Gaza, students from Al-Azhar University marched on the contested Jewish settlements of Kfar Darom and Netzarim and the closed "borders" of Erez and Rafah, confrontations which quickly became gun-fights between Israeli and PNA forces. In Bethlehem, Palestinians attacked and torched the scaffolding surrounding the Jewish enclave of Rachel's Tomb, with PNA police and the army again exchanging fire. In Nablus, a protest that began as a march on the Jewish enclave of Joseph's Tomb became a PNA military siege after Israeli forces tried to enter the Palestinian-controlled areas around the tomb, leaving a toll of one Palestinian and six Israeli soldiers dead.

Israel's Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai declared a "state of emergency" in the Occupied Territories, sending tanks and armoured personnel carriers to Gaza and Nablus. In Ramallah, Palestinian pro-

testers were dispersed by Cobra helicopter gunships, firing cannon and high-velocity machine guns. Then at around noon, Arafat issued orders for his forces to fire only "in self-defence" to spare "civilian fatalities", in the words of West Bank head of the PNA's Preventive Security Force, Jibril Rajoub. By nightfall, Gaza was relatively quiet, Bethlehem under control and Nablus under a PNA-imposed curfew, engaging the captured army unit to be substituted by 54 fresh Israeli soldiers, conveyed to Joseph's Tomb under PNA escort.

At the end of the bloodiest day in anyone's memory, 35 Palestinians and 11 Israeli soldiers had been killed, and close on 1,000 Palestinians maimed. Netanyahu said the carnage was a "cynical manipulation" by Arafat to extract Israeli concessions in the peace process. Arafat called it a "massacre". But the most accurate description was broadcast by Israeli army radio outside Netzarim in Gaza. It was, it said, "a picture of war".

## To die fighting

Last week's deadly clashes are just a link in the chain of uncertainties Palestinians have been enduring, writes **Tarek Hassan** from Gaza

Palestinian protests have dwindled after four days of fierce confrontation. However Israel's war against them has not ended. Rather, it began long before the uprising triggered by the Jerusalem tunnel, as far back, in fact, as the early stages of the implementation of the Oslo accords and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). It is a war in which Israeli soldiers need not use their guns, because it is waged through economic strangulation, the disembowelling of Palestinian territories, closures, curfews, imposed unemployment and starvation. And when this war pushes Palestinians to rebel and fight back, the armoured trucks, tanks and helicopter gunships are brought in to impose obedience.

Palestinians agree that Israel's "genius" fully manifests itself in the way "they push us to die fighting them."

The Israeli army has imposed an internal closure on Palestinian cities, villages and camps, effectively separating them from each other, and forcing them to live under a shadow of constant fear and worry. Aside from the internal closure, and sometimes as a direct result of it, the PNA-controlled areas suffer from shortages of basic commodities, including foodstuffs, medicine, petrol and fossil fuels. Services provided by hospitals and medical clinics have progressively declined, resulting in the unnecessary loss of innocent lives. School terms are continuously disrupted.

This week, a three-year-old sick Palestinian child died after he and his parents were turned back at an Israeli checkpoint in the West Bank, thereby denying them access to Hebron. In a similar instance, a young Palestinian journalist, employed by a Western news agency, was injured by Israeli bullets during this week's clashes. He only managed to leave Gaza through Egypt, from where he travelled to London for treatment.

The fate of Palestinians entering the occupied territories from Jordan is equally uncertain. They be-

come stranded in Jericho because invariably the Israeli army prevents them from continuing to their destinations. Palestinians travelling from Egypt find themselves stranded in Gaza.

Suzanne Abu Selim, a young Palestinian ministry of tourism employee who lives in Gaza, accompanied a foreign tour group on a sight-seeing trip around Palestinian cities. Although all members of the tour group were permitted to leave Gaza, Suzanne has not returned home. She remains confined to Bethlehem where the Israeli army detained her.

Ahmed Zaki, an employee of the Palestinian broadcasting corporation, is in a comparable predicament. Zaki was in Gaza when the recent uprising took place and the Israeli authorities have prevented him from returning home to the West Bank. He has tried and failed on three occasions to leave Gaza by accompanying Palestinian ministers in their vehicles. Each time the Israeli army allowed the ministers to pass but detained Zaki. Now he is attempting to find a route out of Gaza into Egypt and then on to Jordan, where he will attempt to enter the West Bank. Zaki fears, however, that if he goes to Jordan he may never be allowed into the West Bank again.

A group of Egyptians found themselves, in the wake of the recent clashes, trapped in a sealed-off Bethlehem for three days. Although they were permitted to leave on the fourth day by a Palestinian bus taking them to Jerusalem and Jericho, each time they left one Palestinian city and entered another they had to change buses. Israeli authorities require Palestinian vehicles to display license plates identifying the name of their city. Vehicles from one city are not allowed to enter any other city under the rules of internal closure.

After two years of self-rule the occupation is still very much in evidence and the war against the Palestinians, which manifests itself in many different forms, continues without abatement.

Growing fears that Israel may launch a large-scale military offensive against Lebanon were heightened last week after Israeli warplanes and helicopters bombed areas in South Lebanon for eight consecutive days. The latest flare-up in violence came after continuous Israeli threats against Lebanon and the movement of Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli troops. Israeli planes had rocketed suspected resistance targets on the hills and the villages in the Iqlim Al-Tuffah mountain ridge, a territory just north of Israel's occupied zone and a stronghold of Hizbullah, the group spearheading the guerrilla war to oust Israeli forces from territory they occupy in South Lebanon.

This followed a resistance operation which left two Israeli soldiers dead and a number of others wounded. Israeli shells slammed into civilian areas wounding 50-year-old Mariam Sharif Wadi in the village of Jusa. "We were sitting in our house when the bombing started. We had no idea that a shell would fall next to our house since the cease-fire understanding does not allow Israel to hit populated areas. But a shell exploded only metres away and we were thrown across the room," Mariam, who broke her leg and suffered other injuries, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The attack breached the April ceasefire understanding between Lebanon and Israel which bans attacks on civilian areas. The five-nation monitoring group in charge of looking into truce violations acknowledged that Israel targeted civilian areas but no action was taken against the Israelis. It also considered an Israeli complaint that Hizbullah guerrillas launched rockets from populated areas. The group said in a statement that firing on and from civilian areas creates a very dangerous situation.

The Israeli shelling also completely or partially destroyed a number of houses in the villages of Iqlim Al-Tuffah. In Jarjoub, Abu Afif and his family were lucky to have left their house before it was hit. "When the bombing started we left the village. This morning we came back home only to find that our

## Drums of war

Despite efforts to prevent an all-out war in the Middle East, an upsurge in military activity cannot be ruled out in South Lebanon until a political settlement is forged, writes **Zeina Khodr** from Beirut

house and car were damaged by Israeli shells. Every time we rebuild what was destroyed, the bombs fall again. This is not a way to live," Abu Afif told the *Weekly*. "This is not the first time we experienced Israeli shelling. But no matter what happens we are not leaving. We continue to remain steadfast. This is our home, our land and nobody will make us leave."

Lebanon has reportedly taken seriously a warning by the head of Israel's proxy militia in South Lebanon, Antoine Lahd, of a possible large-scale military strike if guerrilla attacks against Israelis in the south are stepped up and if Beirut does not accept Israel's Lebanon First proposal.

Foreign Minister Fares Boueiz described the warning as "blackmail which aimed at forcing Lebanon to accept Israel's peace proposals". Lebanon and Syria rejected Israel's offer to resume talks without conditions and reaffirmed negotiations should be based on the principle of exchanging land for peace.

In July, Israel said it was ready to withdraw from South Lebanon under a deal to be negotiated with Syria, if Syrian troops also left Lebanon and if the Lebanese army guarantees Israel's security against guerrilla attacks.

Syria has during the past few weeks redeployed at least 12,000 troops — a third of its force in Lebanon — to the Bekaa, near the Syrian border. Some of the troops are within striking range of key Israeli posts in the Golan Heights. Press reports quoting Lebanese sources said Syria drafted some 100,000 of its nationals into the army as part of its defensive mobilisation. The Israeli media highlighted the movements as plausible indications that Syria, frustrated over deadlocked peace talks, might be preparing an attack against Israel.

But Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad recently denied the troop movement from the Bekaa closer to the Golan amounted to a prelude to an attack on Israel. Syrian forces started redeploying after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apparently threatened Syria when he said attacks on Israelis and

their local allies would cause an escalation of the situation. Damascus had said earlier the movements are not "distanced from the increasing Israeli threats against Damascus and Beirut which gives Syria the right to strengthen its forces."

Lebanon has also reinforced its defenses on the front-lines in the west Bekaa — between the Lebanese-Syrian border and the edge of Israel's occupation zone. Israeli forces have also reinforced their positions in occupied South Lebanon.

While the concerned parties have been taking up defensive positions, the American ambassador to Lebanon, Richard Jones, ruled out a military confrontation between Syria and Israel. "I do not see anything particularly alarming in the Syrian redeployment. A confrontation is far-fetched," he said. "I do not think Israel will carry out a wide-scale attack against Lebanon."

France has also tried to reassure Israel about the Syrian movements and maintained that the redeployments were routine. But the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, Hameyoun Ali Zadah, said the recent Israeli threats should be taken seriously. Tehran morally and financially backs Hizbullah. The leader of a splinter faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Colonel Munir Makdash, expected the security situation to deteriorate in the south. "There will be no Israeli attack similar to Operation Grapes of Wrath, but Israel will step up its aggressions in the south," he told the *Weekly*.

The deputy editor-in-chief of *As-Safir* daily, Mohamed Mashmouhi, said the new uprising in the self-rule areas may have a positive effect on the Syrian and Lebanese negotiating fronts with Israel. "If Israel is pressured to make concessions on the Palestinian front, it could mean it will yield to Syrian and Lebanese demands. In fact, Israeli politicians were recently talking about giving up parts of the Golan. This may be the beginning," he told the *Weekly*.

هكذا من الأصل



# Uprising against Oslo

The explosion in Palestine is a revolt against the text and maps, the planners and implementation of Palestinian colonisation and humiliation, writes **Edward Said**. It may also herald the end of the two-state solution

# A land and its people

Having witnessed the latest uprising in Ramallah there is no question, writes **Mahmoud Darwish**, that the only possible immediate solution to the Palestinian question lies in establishing two states

There have been two battles between Palestinians and Israelis over the past few days. One is over Jerusalem, and was most immediately provoked by Israeli Mayor Ehud Olmert's decision to re-open a tunnel beneath what some Jews call the Temple Mount, site of the second temple destroyed almost two millennia ago, and what Muslims call Al-Haram Al-Sharif, the noble sanctuary, where the Mosque of Omar and the Aqsa Mosque have stood for almost fifteen hundred years. As both sides quite rightly see it, the issue is dominance over Jerusalem.

The sudden, middle-of-the-night re-opening of the tunnel seems the latest in a series of "created" facts, an act of arrogant triumphalism, a sort of rubbing of Palestinian and Muslim noses in the dirt. This had the added effect of pouring fuel on the smoldering sectarian competition that has been the city's long-standing bane. I do not think there is any doubt that this Likud assertion of what is unmistakably Jewish power over Muslim holy places was intended to show the world, especially the increasingly powerful right-wing Israeli religious factions, that Judaism can do what it wants. It is a profoundly ugly gesture planned also to dramatise Palestinian (Arab, Muslim) powerlessness.

The second battle is full of paradoxes and arises directly out of the Oslo peace process. Those of us who criticised it from the start were a minority who grasped its ungenerous, essentially humiliating implications for the Palestinian people. This view has since acquired great support. Sponsored by the United States, the peace process was built callously upon the sufferings of a people whose society had been destroyed in 1948 by an incoming Jewish population claiming biblical rights in Palestine. Two thirds of the land's inhabitants were driven from their homes. In 1967 Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine. Yet Oslo neither ended Palestinian dispossession, nor genuinely alleviated the short-term miseries of an Israeli military occupation during which the economy, infrastructure, human resources of the Palestinians had been programmatically damaged. It is true that Yasser Arafat, isolated

after his ruinous Gulf crisis policy, was allowed in 1994 to set up a truncated autonomy regime that was still controlled by the Israelis. But despite the rhetoric and some of the ceremonies and symbols of peace, Israeli West Bank settlements grew during the Rabin-Pereh period that ended in May of this year. The newly re-drawn areas of the West Bank and Gaza gave Palestinians limited autonomy (but no sovereignty). Meanwhile Arafat built a Palestinian Authority that was, so far as generally improving conditions was concerned, a dismal failure.

The autonomy arrangements (excluding the four million refugees whose destiny was postponed to some nebulous "final status" situation) have to live with today's a bizarre amalgam of three historically discarded "solutions" devised by white colonialists to the problem of native peoples in 19th-century Africa and the Americas. One was the concept that natives could be turned into irrelevant exotics, with their lands taken from them, and living conditions settled on them that reduced them to day labourers and pre-modern farmers. This is the American Indian model. Second is the division of lands (reservations) into non contiguous bastions, in which an apartheid policy gave special privileges to white (today's Israeli) settlers, while letting the natives live in their own run-down ghettos; there they would be responsible for their municipal affairs, yet subject to white (again Israeli) security control. This is the South African model. Finally the need to give these measures some degree of local acceptability required a native "chief" to sign on the dotted line. This was the French and British model for 19th-century Africa.

The problem, of course, is that, as a nation, the Palestinians were hardly likely to be content with patchwork anachronisms of this sort. Arafat placed himself in an impossible situation. He kept promising things (like East Jerusalem) which he simply could not deliver, but he was also too jealous of his own power to allow anyone else any authority or breathing space. Most of the re-

wards he, as well as the Israelis and Americans, kept speaking about never materialised. Gaza has 70 per cent unemployment. Investments have not poured in. The clamp-down on expression and democratic practices is as severe as under direct Israeli rule. A vast police apparatus has transformed the barely discernible outlines of Palestinian self-determination into a premature replica of countries like Iraq. And still the Israelis clamour for security from Palestinian terrorists while their colonists confiscate more land, build more



houses, bully more people such as the inhabitants of Hebron whose current plight is a capsule version of the whole mess. Guarded by units of the Israeli army a group of 400 settlers squats in the middle of this Arab town whose 200,000 inhabitants have been punished by curfews, the closure of the central market, and a whole system of barricades. Why? Because in February 1994 Baruch Goldstein entered the Hebron mosque and massacred 29 Muslim worshippers in cold blood.

No human beings can endure grotesque injustice and suffering of this kind for very long. Since Netanyahu came to power he has interminably made it clear that he is tough and that peace with the terrorist Arafat is a negligible priority. But this was all icing on a cake already baked and partially eaten by the Labour Party. The terrible thing is how much some Palestinians trusted Israeli intentions, particularly at a time when some Arab governments were so supinely weak and villainous in their hypocrisy and men-

dacity. A good deal of what has been happening in Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank is therefore an explosion that could easily have been foreseen. It is an intifada against the very texts and maps of the Oslo Accords, and against its planners and participants, Israeli as well as Palestinian. For several months, Palestinian dissatisfaction with Arafat's regime has been expressed in mini-intifadas against his police in places like Nabulus and Tulkarem. Polls have shown a marked increase in dissatisfaction and anger. But when the die is cast and there seems to be a new Israeli push to hurt all Palestinians, the rage spills over, as it has during the past few days, with Arafat and Netanyahu having no real choice left except to try to bring things under control, to make Oslo work a little longer.

The horror of so much Palestinian blood wantonly spilled is scarcely mitigated by a premonition of future eruptions. Israel is trying as much as possible now to pre-empt, perhaps even circumvent, the final-status negotiations. Palestinian options are not so clear, given the tremendous disadvantages under which we suffer as a people. The sight of Palestinians being beaten, shoved around, arrested, killed and wounded is very painful and an occasion for deep sorrow and anger. It is perhaps possible that Arafat and his shaken Palestinian Authority may have begun to perceive that the final status is likely to be as dismal as the present one, thus egging on unarmed civilians to take on the Israeli army. But there is always the danger that such justified discontent cannot so easily be turned off and on, or manipulated whenever the going gets rough with the unregenerate Netanyahu.

The present crisis is, I think, a glimmering of the end of the two-state solution whose unworkability Oslo, perhaps unconsciously, embodied. Israelis and Palestinians are too intertwined with each other in history, experience and actuality to separate, even though each proclaims the need for separate statehood. The challenge is to find a peaceful way in which to co-exist not as warring Jews, Muslims, and Christians, but as equal citizens in the same land.

It appears now — and for some time to come — that the Palestinians will continue to be deprived of the opportunity to transform their reflection, whether in their own mirror or in the mirrors of others, from that of hero or victim to the image they so much desire, that of an ordinary person. And the reason for this? Simply because their reality is being transformed yet again from a grey area that opens onto the unknown to a bloody one opening onto hell.

This experimenting with an experimental peace, drained of the minimum of national independence, justice, and conditions necessary for securing an ordinary human life, has resulted in an explosion that was easily predicted by those capable of distinguishing between a truce dictated by military strength and a real peace. The latter, evolving from a new conceptual framework, accommodates the mutual interests of all parties in formulating their common future, one which respects the rights of all, both on the land and beneath it.

Yet the Israeli obsession with expelling the native other, both from the present and the past, has yet to be satisfied, hence the search for such ancient memories as might legitimise the theft — effected by the latest tools of war dragged in the wake of a myth — of a land and its people. Hence the digging, the search for alternative roots of legitimacy, excavating an obsession that transcends the realm of politics to encompass psychological complexes that need not exist following the advent of the new world order. Yet they continue digging, in the hope that the bottom of the earth might furnish clearer evidence, and in the hope that the buried self might reveal that history, as well as God, is the monopoly of one people, beyond the grasp of geology.

What lies deep beneath the surface of the land? And what if we were able to decipher the exact use of these tunnels, were able to tell whether they were the site of the stables of Solomon's putative horses, or a Roman drainage system for dirty water, or clean water for that matter, or even warehouses for honey and oil?

Whatever it is decided these tunnels may once have been there can be no doubt that they constitute the heritage of the land, are evidence of the glory and variety of its civilisations and cultures and of the myths created by the tribes and peoples who have lived there since ancient times. They are a component of the rich and varied story that is the history of Palestine.

God knows there are reasons enough in our own time, on the ground and not beneath it, to ignite conflict, without this obsession for rooting beneath the surface, for turning the past, too, into a battle ground.

A cursory glance at the lives of Palestinians under occupation, under an experimental peace that has compounded the appetite of the occupiers for their expressions of arrogance and racism, is sufficient to expose the extent to which they have been deprived of the right to ponder basic questions about the self and life, deprived of the right to lead an ordinary life. The Palestinians cannot walk toward an ordinary day. Between each of their steps the occupation has erected a huge number of barricades, barricades that speak not only of the superiority of the white coloniser but which constantly remind the Palestinian that he is worthy not even of inferior status.

When the meandering Israeli consciousness made a backward leap and brought to power forces representing

the traditionalist Zionist past, those forces arrived armed with a classical racist discourse and a project that sought to reduce the Palestinian ghetto into a square of despair. They delivered a single message to the Arab world — that the book of the Arab-Israeli struggle would have to be reopened at its first page. The Palestinians — hostages to such conditions — and their National Authority, had no choice but to conclude, resoundingly, that there could be no glimmer of light, of peace, at the end of any of the tunnels excavated by the Zionist past, be those tunnels under or over ground.

The present uprising — occurring in a climate sympathetic on the national, regional and international levels — is an attempt to prompt Israel into a redefinition of its concept of peace and a reconsideration of its options vis-à-vis the question of war and peace. It is an urgent call for a more harmonious formulation of the peace/security equation. Certainly security, in the narrow, oppressive sense, can never lead to peace. Rather it is peace, which encompasses the recognition of the national identity and humanity of the other, that will furnish security.

The heroic uprising of the Palestinian people a sudden manifestation of a spirit returned? One should not be tempted by such rhetorical flourishes for the anxious spirit of the Palestinians has smouldered like an ember, had never been extinguished in the way arrogance had led the Israelis to assume. What happened is simple. The Palestinians were bound to give the unjust settlement proffered them the time needed before Israeli consciousness of the nature of their relationship with the other could evolve, the time necessary before this present, unjust settlement could be transformed into a just peace, satisfying the national interests of both parties and representing a human value to be cherished.

The new obstacles, daily placed by the Israeli occupation in the way of Palestinian destiny, do not imply that the two state option must now retreat, that the only option now is the long term historical solution of one state for two peoples. On the contrary, the hell let loose by the Israeli occupation on the lives of the Palestinians, the atmosphere of growing suspicion between Israelis and Palestinians, the military, psychological and educational chasm that separates the two peoples all contrive to make of the two state option the most realistic of solutions. And at the moment it is impossible to even contemplate the long-term historical solution of a single state with two peoples without first having two states.

The uprising of the Palestinian people illustrates the interlocking nature of the relationship between peace and freedom and between the Palestinian-Israeli peace and the Arab-Israeli peace. It takes us beyond any reading of texts of interim agreements and the humiliating manner of implementing those texts, towards something much clearer and far-sighted. It takes us to the overwhelming questions which the Israelis are intent on evading. How can a transitional peace be established without a clear vision of the final goal? For how long can the Palestinians continue the experiment with this experimental peace that is at once flawed and imposed under occupation. It is peace, now, that is itself in search of peace.

Article especially written for Al-Ahram Weekly, translated by Mona Anis and edited by Nigel Ryan.



# Consensus and conflict

What lessons can be gleaned from recent events in Palestine? **Azmi Bishara** plots the bottom line and its likely repercussions

Recent uprisings in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza illustrate three fundamental aspects of the ongoing crisis. Firstly, the model devised for the Palestinian National Authority's security forces, fashioned along the lines of Lahad's army in South Lebanon — devised, incidentally, by the Israeli Labour Party and not the Likud — has proved a dismal failure. The Palestinian security forces could not, after all, stand idly by as Palestinians were subjected to a premeditated massacre, as bullets were showered down on Palestinian civilians demonstrating in the Occupied Territories. And the failure of the model devised by Israel will not only have repercussions for the present Likud government, but will constitute a problem for any future Labour government. To think that a force based on Lahad's southern Lebanese army could succeed in Palestine runs counter to the logic of history and the nature of the conflict in Palestine.

Recent events also serve to illustrate the centrality of Jerusalem in the Arab psyche. Any threat to the city is capable of concretising Arab solidarity to the extent that any new action by the Likud government to fur-

ther Judaise the city must be weighed against the reactions provoked by the act of opening a breach in a 10cm thick wall in the Al-Haram Al-Sharif complex.

Events also show that at a time when Palestinians are struggling for sovereignty over their lands it has become increasingly apparent that it is only when the Palestinians themselves draw upon their latest resources to shape their own destiny that other forces — Arab diplomacy, the international community and even the Israeli opposition, spurred into action after the death of Israeli soldiers — are activated in the search for a just solution.

This is the bottom line. But what actually underpinned recent events in Palestine? There appears to be an Israeli consensus that responsibility for the killing of tens of Palestinians and Israelis, and the wounding of hundreds of Palestinians, rests squarely with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, whose approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict is based on two premises.

Netanyahu approaches issues with a crisis management rather than political mindset. He is unwilling to countenance any comprehensive peace

with the Palestinians, insisting instead on pursuing policies of dispossession. And thus the pattern emerges — action by the Israeli government provoking a crisis, followed by a meeting with the Palestinian leadership to calm the reactions they had themselves provoked. From which, of course, we must conclude that Netanyahu views his meeting with Arafat as a concession on his part, and one for which Arafat should be duly grateful.

The second premise is based less on Netanyahu's own misconceptions than on the overtly racist belief on Netanyahu's part in some nascent propensity on the part of Arabs to backslide when faced with force. In any crisis Netanyahu believes that the only thing the Israelis need to do is exhibit their unflinching resolve and the Arabs will eventually abandon any claims to their rights. After all, what is the history of the Arab-Israeli struggle if not a retreat by Arabs before the logic of Israeli might? Such inherent racism means, of course, that the only real thorn in Netanyahu's side is the existence of a dissenting voice within Israeli society itself. Given his misunderstandings of the problems we

should not, then, have been surprised that Netanyahu was taken aback by the unfolding of events in the last few days when, rather than retreat, the Palestinians stood their ground before the bullets of the Israeli army and in so doing illustrated their refusal to become collaborators with, or even compliant subjects of, Israeli power. Events also revealed that the Palestinian leadership is itself capable of making successful calculations, and that they are not in the business of offering Netanyahu unconditional cooperation, or of allowing him a smooth ride during his four year term with its continuing programme of Judaisation.

The extent of Netanyahu's surprise was clearly visible during the first press conference he held following the outbreak of violence when for the first time in the history of Israel a prime minister faced the press surrounded by all the symbols of Israeli might. Flanking Netanyahu at the conference were the minister of defence, the minister of internal security, the chief of military intelligence, the chief of general intelligence, chief of staff of the army and the chief of staff of the police. The message of this

unprecedented scene was clear. Here was a weak prime minister inviting the military establishment to share responsibility for his political miscalculations. So what is the likely outcome of the recent confrontation? Certainly the Palestinians have achieved some gains despite the fact that the balance of power is firmly tipped in Israel's favour. They have discovered that they can command regional and international support against the crude policies of the Likud government providing they are able to smooth out internal difficulties and facilitate a constructive relationship between the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian civil society. And the key towards building such a relationship rests in the hands of the Palestinian political establishment, which can and should be the driving force behind a campaign against the system of apartheid operating in Palestine.

If the events of the last week have proved anything, it is that, following the collapse of apartheid in South Africa, the cost of replicating such a system in Palestine will be insupportable.

The writer is an Arab member of the Israeli Knesset







## Jerusalem centre stage

Faisal Hussein, Palestinian National Authority official in charge of the Jerusalem file, talks to Rasha Saad about the fury in Jerusalem

Israel has charged that the Palestinians overreacted to the tunnel's opening. How do you respond? The opening of the tunnel was the straw that broke the camel's back. The Israelis not only refrained from implementing the peace agreement but also violated it: they have deprived some Palestinians of their identity cards and closed Jerusalem to isolate it. There is also the problem of Palestinian prisoners, the settlement expansions, and the recent internal closures.

The danger of the tunnel's opening lies in that it violates the status quo in the city, thus sparking confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The Israelis implemented changes in their own interests before negotiations about the final status of Jerusalem have even begun. The opening of the tunnel was also seen as the beginning of a series of Israeli measures to gain total control over Jerusalem.

Since the tunnel has existed for over a decade, why didn't you object earlier? The Israelis have hinted at opening this tunnel before, and I warned them that this step would spark unrest. I cautioned Former Israeli Premier Shimon Peres' government directly and now Netanyahu's government indirectly through the media. Also, the Islamic Waqf directly warned Netanyahu of the consequences of opening the tunnel.

Are Israeli violations in Jerusalem part of a consistent overall Israeli policy or were they intensified under Likud?

I believe they are part of an overall policy. We were able to confront Peres' government and establish dialogue. However, Netanyahu's government does not want to discuss anything with us. During Peres' administration there were violations, but Netanyahu's actions are all violations.

You have repeatedly accused Israel of taking steps to Judaize Jerusalem. How has this been accomplished? Israel has prevented Palestinians from building new houses while at the same time allowing Israelis to do so. Employment opportunities are rare in Jerusalem and thus Palestinians are pushed to seeking jobs outside the city. Furthermore, Israel deprives them of their identity cards.

The Israelis have also been working on closing and cordoning off Jerusalem. Shop owners, greatly affected by such closures, have been forced to move their shops outside the city — in other words, indirectly they are evicted.

Do you think that the latest violence imposed the issue of Jerusalem as a priority in peace negotiations? Certainly. The latest incidents did impose the issue as a priority. Under such circumstances, ignoring the issue would be disastrous. Now there is no postponing the issue. And this is not something that can be delayed simply because Israel does not want a solution.

What are the Palestinians' most urgent demands at the moment? Israel should implement exactly what has already been agreed upon, address the issue of the Palestinian prisoners, and start the redeployment from Hebron.

But do the Palestinians hold bargaining cards which are strong enough to force concessions from an extremist Likud government? The Palestinian reaction was a cry that answers 'yes we have!'. A cry that says that we are ready to confront any threat the way we did this time. Nonetheless, we would choose negotiations against those who are using their guns.

And what about the rest of the Arab countries? Politically, Jerusalem should be a priority for all the Arab world. It should be addressed not only on the level of the Arab League but also on the level of bilateral talks.

Spiritually, the Arabs should publicise the Jerusalem issue through media campaigns and seminars and by teaching its history in schools. We should also care to guide tourists through our means of communication and acquaint them with the Jerusalem issue. Financially, Jerusalem is in great need of Arab aid. We are hoping that there will be cooperation between Arab schools, universities and hospitals and those in Jerusalem.



In the worst clashes of their kind since the end of the Intifada in 1993, Israeli soldiers clashed with Palestinians demonstrating against the opening of the tunnel beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Israeli soldiers, working with brutal efficiency, not only assaulting young Palestinians wielding stones, but also directing their blows at top Palestinian officials like 50-year-old Zuhdi Nashashibi (top). Torn between their official responsibilities and standing alongside the young demonstrators, PA forces (bottom) ultimately joined in the struggle, completing the barrage of stones and bullets with some bullets of their own. Meanwhile, Israeli peace activists staged their own demonstration, protesting against Netanyahu's policies. (photos: Reuters, AFP, AP)



## 'Nobody is intimidated'

Hanan Ashrawi, Palestinian minister of education and Palestinian Legislative Council member, talks to Sherine Bahaa about the Palestinian resistance to Israel's intransigence which came to a head with the opening of a tunnel in Jerusalem's old city



What is your interpretation of events in Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Territories this week?

The situation here has been progressively deteriorating as a result of a very persistent Israeli policy of reneging on agreements, violating Palestinian rights, imposing collective punishments, expanding settlement activities, carrying out unilateral steps in Jerusalem to change the character of the city and to extract it from the heart of Palestine, refusing to negotiate permanent status issues, making ideological statements about permanent status agenda topics like Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood.

In addition, Israel went on imposing closure and a state of siege on Palestinian territories. This has led to the destruction of whatever economy we have had, imposed severe hardships on the Palestinian people and at the same time eroded any confidence people have in the peace process or in Israeli intentions.

Matters have been building up and they came to a head with the digging of the tunnel, which in a sense epitomises many of Israel's violations. It is the essence of Israeli policy. It is an expression of total disregard for Palestinian rights, feelings and spiritual commitments. It is a total violation of the character of Jerusalem. At the same time, these unilateral actions in Jerusalem seek to consolidate Israel's unilateral illegal annexation of the city. Additionally, emotions were highly inflamed as a result of the non-redeployment from Hebron and the rest of the West Bank.

Do these events herald a resumption of the Intifada, albeit in different forms?

It is similar to the Intifada in that it is popular, spontaneous and a collective expression of human will in the face of injustice and oppression. It was a very significant message sent to the Israelis and to the world at large to show that the Palestinian people are seriously committed to a genuine peace. They will not accept any violation of their rights, their lands and their holy places or of their future.

So it should have been an eye-opener for the sponsors [of the peace process], the international community and for the Israeli government which has done nothing but use the language of threat, intimidation, military domination and oppression.

Many in Palestine and outside it are now convinced that after 100 days in office Netanyahu has proved to be a committed enemy of peace. Why then go on with the peace process?

Netanyahu has proved many things. His government, its frame of mind, mentality, past statements and discourse is a drawback in history. This government uses the anachronistic and archaic language of the pre-peace era, previous to Madrid. It uses the language of ideology and military superiority and control. It uses the language of strength and absolutism. It has single handedly succeeded in creating an atmosphere of confusion, violence and distrust, not only for the Palestinians but for the Arab World and the world at large.

Netanyahu is not in touch with reality: he deals only with a fictitious reality that is fabricated in his own mind and, therefore, has no critical distance from himself or his own actions and statements. He tries to find a scapegoat and blame the victim instead of really assessing the tremendously dangerous policies and measures that he has taken and that have led to a very serious deterioration of the situation.

So this kind of wilful blindness, whether it is as a result of ignorance or whether it is as a result of conscious manipulation of the facts, is extremely dangerous in a statesman who holds the peace process hostage and who can draw the whole region into a whole new cycle of conflict, violence and war.

The popularity of Netanyahu has decreased over the past few days and a meeting between ex-premier Peres and the head of the Shas Party was interpreted as an attempt to withdraw confidence from the government and call for early elections. What do you think?

First, the Israeli opposition, unfortunately, has to put its house in order because it is in a bit of disarray after its defeat in the elections. It is time that they put behind them all their internal rivalries and mutual recriminations and start dealing with the challenges of the present and the future. I feel that the Israeli opposition has been alarmingly quiet even though they just started moving recently, a bit late.

They need to present a real agenda as opposed to Netanyahu's spurious agenda. Therefore, it is up to them to challenge Netanyahu's discourse and actions, and to prove to the world that Israel still has a constituency for peace. This is needed for the integrity of Israel itself because Netanyahu is going to bring destruction on the Israelis as well as on the Palestinians and the Arab World.

Now, I feel that there have been political moves being made. Peres has met with the Shas leader and they are meeting with other religious leaders. There are two ways in which this could go, either to withdraw confidence which is not an easy thing to do given the nature of the new elections' law and the fact that Netanyahu was elected directly as an individual. Or they could move towards a national unity government. Clearly this government is very dangerous for everybody. But if the opposition enters into a coalition, it is very important that the national unity government is not constituted at the expense of the peace camp, the voice of reason and moderation in Israel. In Israel, whenever there has been such a national unity government, the

dominant party generally neutralised the weaker one. Hopefully, if there is to be such a government, it will be on the basis of a peace program and not on the basis of accommodating the agenda of the entrenched right wing.

How do you interpret Netanyahu's timing of opening the tunnel, especially with the US presidential elections due in five weeks time?

I think that Netanyahu has misjudged the situation totally. He felt that he could exploit the pre-election period and capitalise on the US's inability to exert pressure on Israel as a result of its domestic constraints during an election period. But what he has done is actually to draw the US into a very critical situation because the current government is facing a real challenge to prove that it can rescue peace without putting pressure on the Israelis, knowing that the two are irreconcilable. If the US seriously wants to rescue peace, then it has to take a firm stance toward Israel.

Netanyahu has placed Clinton in a very difficult situation vis-à-vis his constituency and created an atmosphere of tremendous instability and volatility which does not allow the US President to exploit the Middle East peace factor in his favour in the elections.

I think it is a serious political miscalculation to try to exploit the so-called 'paralysis of a pre-election government' and at the same time plunge the region into turbulence. The US is trying to keep up the appearance of being the peace broker in charge of bringing together parties that are hostile and distrustful of each other. If this summit fails then very clearly the repercussions will be widely felt, not least among the American voters.

Jordan suggested establishing an international committee to monitor the holy sites in Jerusalem. What do you think of this suggestion?

I think such suggestions have to be coordinated with the Palestinians and with the Arab World. Jerusalem is a Palestinian city under Israeli occupation and we are responsible for the holy sites. The Palestinian Islamic Waqf is in charge of the holy sites and the Palestinian Christian churches are in charge of the Christian holy places, but as far as overall supervision I really feel that if we are going to need an international force, it should be in all of the occupied territories to ensure that Israel does not persist in violating our lands.

Do you see any value in holding the economic summit in this regional atmosphere of violence?

Frankly, no. I think that the economic summit requires and presupposes an atmosphere of reconciliation. Right now the Israeli government has no will to achieve peace. All its efforts are directed at undermining peace.

I do not think that creating again the illusion of cooperation and prosperity in the region will serve the cause of peace because it will play into the hands of the hardline and intransigent Israeli government to exploit for its public image. It will also give Israel the illusion that it can do whatever it wants. It can defy the world, insult the Arab world, steal the Palestinian reality and not only get away with it but also reap the rewards.

Netanyahu is adopting an intransigent attitude. Will Arafat adopt a confrontational policy or will he go back to his wait-and-see policy?

Quite often reality supersedes decision making. The Palestinian people are extremely aware politically and economically and are actively involved in their state's saga. You cannot disregard the human factor, especially since our Palestinian policy has been in harmony with the popular sentiment.

You cannot make policy in a vacuum. Instead you make policy on the basis of many criteria: your internal conditions, the will of your people, your alliances with the Arab world, the internal support you have as well as your position internationally. Israel is one factor but it cannot be the sole determining factor.

I think our policy has to be formulated on the basis of a very solid and thorough analysis of all these factors. Primarily, however, a leadership's responsibility is towards its own people because a leadership's legitimacy comes from its people.

The persistence of Israelis in beating up Palestinians officials in public has dire implications both politically and psychologically. What do you think? This is not something new. Israel has a total disregard for human values, for a minimal level of morality and for a minimal level of respect for the rights of others. We, as people who have lived under occupation for all these years, know first hand that Israel is capable of the extreme racist and violent actions which were clearly displayed in the last week.

We have repeatedly exposed these Israeli actions and proved the point that Israel has gone beyond the pale of any civilised and moral behaviour. If Israelis think that the use of violence and public beatings against Palestinian leaders is going to discredit these leaders in the eyes of their own people, they are wrong. It has the opposite effect. If they think they can intimidate Palestinians through such a blatant use of force and violence and such a violation of internationally accepted norms and standards of moral and political behaviour, they are sadly mistaken. Nobody is intimidated.



## Who loves the Taliban?

ONE OF the most consequential events of the week was the storming of the Afghan capital Kabul by the militant Islamic group, the Taliban. Ironically, the Americans support the Taliban, while the Iranians loathe them.

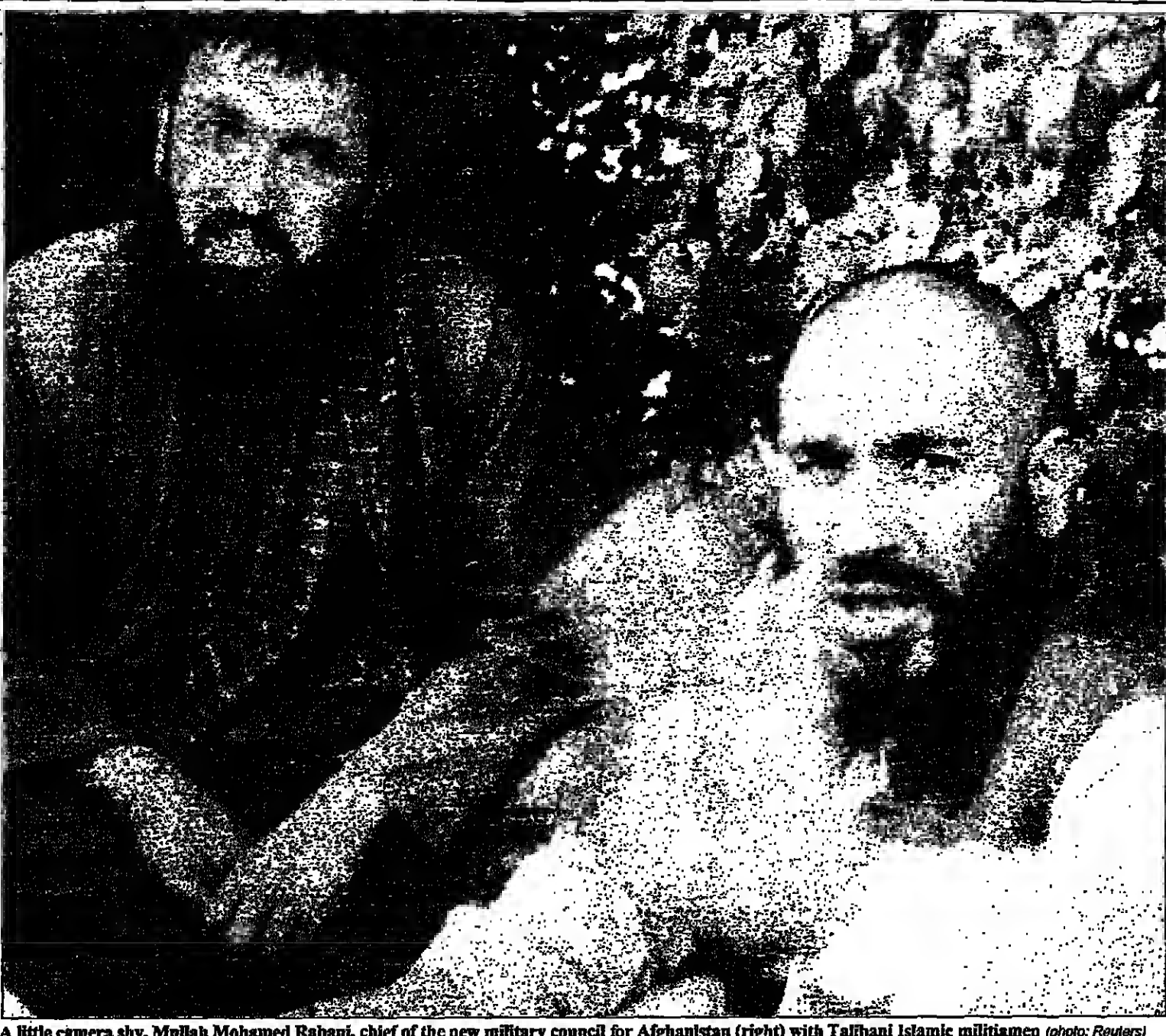
Robin Rafael, the United States assistant secretary of state for South Asia, has met Taliban leaders in the past. American State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said on Monday that US diplomats are prepared to resume travelling to Afghanistan if their safety can be assured. US officials say that Washington does not regard the Taliban as trying to export revolution. The Taliban are ambiguous about America's overtures.

For Washington, Afghanistan is of major importance, not just because of its strategic location at the crossroads between Central Asia, the South Asian subcontinent, China and the Middle East, but also because Afghanistan is the world's largest opium-producing country. Combating narcotic trafficking seems to be high on the American foreign policy agenda. But is this really the case?

The leaders of the Taliban movement are deeply involved in drug trafficking, something to which America has turned a blind eye.

Afghanistan's ousted rulers, also embroiled in the narcotics trade, received little sympathy from Washington. The US is seeking early talks with the Taliban on terrorism, human rights and drug trafficking. So far the Taliban has not responded. Afghanistan borders Iran and Pakistan — both Islamic republics of sorts. The latter actually supported the Taliban's bid for power. Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanjani described the Taliban takeover as "regrettable". Shi'ite Iran has long regarded the "Sunni fundamentalist" Taliban movement as an arch-enemy. "The [Taliban's] top brass is sick in the mind," said an editorial in the semi-official Iranian daily *Kayhan International*.

Meanwhile, Russia, fearing the spread of drugs, weapons and narcotics in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, called an emergency summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States to discuss the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The summit will take place tomorrow in the Kazakh capital Almaty.



A little camera shy, Mullah Mohamed Rabbani, chief of the new military council for Afghanistan (right) with Taliban Islamic militiamen (photo: Reuters)

## Reaching across the Mediterranean

A Cairo conference weighs issues dominating Euro-Arab relations. Gamal Nkrumah attended

What is Europe coming to? Europe has high unemployment levels, but North Africa has even higher rates of joblessness. Racism and anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise throughout Europe, and fascist and neo-Nazi groups are proliferating. Many of the immigrants are North African. Yet the irony is that Europe has chosen this particular moment to make overtures to the developing North African and Middle Eastern states south of the Mediterranean to achieve closer economic association, even integration, with the European Union (EU). Of critical importance is the fact that the initiative is European, and that Europe calls all the shots. Arab states are on the sidelines of the decision-making processes.

"The economic channels leading to Europe from most North African countries are uncharted. Economic and trade relations in the Mediterranean basin have undergone a sea change. Economic policy-making in the region has also been transformed. But economic and trade relations between Europe and North Africa remain unequal. Egyptian Minister of Economy and International Cooperation, Nawal Abdel-Moneim El-Tatary, put it succinctly: "Association with the EU imposes new realities necessitating radical structural readjustment in all the productive processes of the developing economies of the

southern Mediterranean basin." El-Tatary was speaking at an international conference on Euro-Arab partnership agreements, convened in Cairo on 22 and 23 September.

For North Africa, the trade winds of change are unfavourable — but inescapable. "There is a vast difference between the economic dynamics of Europe and those of countries south of the Mediterranean. The two regions have different levels of economic development. European nations use advanced technologies in their industrial production. South of the Mediterranean, the technologies used invariably lag far behind those used in Europe," El-Tatary explained. "The states south of the Mediterranean basin hope that closer association with Europe will lead to increased transfer of technology so that they can accelerate their productive capacities."

Take textiles. Under the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), quotas under the multi-fibre agreement will cease by the end of 2004, but it is up to the EU, and not the southern Mediterranean textile and clothing exporting countries, to decide when particular quotas will go. In exchange, non-tariff barriers will be removed and tariffs will be reduced in the textile-exporting countries. The bottom line is that free trade is not always

entirely free, and that European interests take precedence over southern Mediterranean aspirations.

Europe is urging Arab nations to seize the moment. But few people this side of the Mediterranean understand the processes at work. The crux of the matter is that closer association with Europe requires radical economic changes, which in turn demand far-reaching political changes — something most southern Mediterranean states are loath to acknowledge.

As Europe moves towards economic and monetary union, the southern flank of the Mediterranean basin becomes more nervous. Different interpretations of European motives can lead to different results. Nobody south of the Mediterranean wants a Fortress Europe. But maintaining the regional integration momentum in the Mediterranean basin seems like an elegant solution to a delicate diplomatic problem: can the Arab world treat Europe as an alternative superpower to America? Few are convinced that Europe really matters when it comes to the crunch.

Invariably what America says goes. Europe has little say and no political clout in North African and Middle Eastern affairs. A case in point is the EU shying away from Libya. Mauritania, a Maghrebi nation with no Mediterranean coastline, has been wooed to sign an

agreement with the EU. Libya, with the longest Arab Mediterranean coastline, has not. Why is Libya left out? American political pressure plays no small part in why Europe ostracises Libya.

Problems loom on all sides. The risk of rejecting Europe's overtures is that it could spell economic disaster. We live in the age of regional, even global, economic integration. Nobody is up to making a compelling case for economic isolation — least of all the developing nations of the southern Mediterranean. Still, however much some may wish it otherwise, the aspirations of Third World countries cannot be ignored.

Critical decisions require consensus among the 15 sovereign EU nations. Europe is committed to closer cooperation with North Africa and the Middle East, but the commitment is contingent on stable macro-economic conditions. Abdel-Azziz Hegazi, the former Egyptian premier, presided over the conference proceedings. He rightly rubbished the rose-tinted view of Europe. Ahmed Esmat Abdel-Meguid, secretary-general of the Arab League, was cautiously optimistic.

Venice Kamel, minister for scientific research, was more upbeat, impressing on the participants the need for vast technological transfers from Europe to Arab countries. Abdel-Fattah El-Gebaly, head of the Economic Research

Department at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, delivered a paper entitled "Partnership and Free Trade Agreements".

Nawal Ben Ramadan, assistant director at the Tunisian Ministry for International Cooperation, Sellem Al-Talaty, the director of the Requalification Programme at the Tunisian Ministry of Industry, and Zein Al-Abidin Tarras, the director of the EU Department at the Tunisian Foreign Ministry, reviewed the Euro-Tunisian agreement for the conference participants. Tunisia was the first North African country to sign an agreement with the EU. The Tunisians did not hide the pitfalls. But they did not downplay the advantages either.

Bashir Hamdouche of the Moroccan Institute for Statistics and Applied Economics, Fathallah Wala'lo, the Moroccan minister of Planning and member of the Moroccan parliament, and Abdel-Latif Ben Galun, a professor of law at Fez University, Morocco, explained the pros and cons of the Euro-Moroccan agreement. Like the Tunisians, they felt that they could not ignore Europe. But, again like the Tunisians, they were miffed at European interference in essentially non-economic matters such as human rights and political liberalisation. EU-Arab partnerships are not very neat arrangements.

## Beijing rendezvous

The world's parliamentarians express concern over food security and the growing gap between rich and poor, writes Sami Metwali from Beijing

The 96th Inter-Parliamentary Conference was convened in the Chinese capital Beijing on 16-21 September. The choice of venue for an international parliamentary conference on such a grand scale was telling. Chinese parliamentarians represent a fifth of mankind. The ideological orientation of the conference, reflecting a new international mood, was clearly pro-Third World. The gathering focused on issues such as the provision of health care, shelter, education, women's and children's rights and, most importantly, food.

The Egyptian delegation was led by Fathi Sorour, the president of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and speaker of the Egyptian parliament. Representatives of the parliaments of some 130 countries were present. The world's parliamentarians gathered in China, a land of an ancient civilisation which is surging ahead with rapid economic growth and trying to come to grips with democracy without compromising its unique socialist experience.

The Chinese hosts were impressed with the contribution of the Egyptian participants, who included Kamal El-Shazly, Ahmed Hammad, Mohamed Abdullah, Ahmed Abu Zeid, Tawfiq Abdull Ismail, Khaled Mohieddin, Abdel-Wahab Qotah and Yusra Louza among other members of the People's Assembly. From the Shura Council there was Fathi Ragab, Farhanda Hassan and Ahmed Rashad Moussa. Other Egyptian participants included Sami Mahran, the secretary-general of the People's Assembly, Farag El-Durri, the secretary-general of the Shura Council, and Ambassador Helmi Bedeir, Egypt's chief envoy in China.

Two themes dominated discussions. The first, the promotion of greater respect for and protection of human rights in general and women's and children's rights in particular, was prepared by the Committee on Juridical and Human Rights Questions. The second, policies and strategies to ensure the right to food at this time of the globalisation of the economy and trade liberalisation, was prepared by the Committee on Economic and Social Questions. Delegates worried over the growing gap between rich and poor nations and between rich and poor in almost all countries — developed, developing and underdeveloped.

Special emphasis was put on the plight of the world's 800 million malnourished people, and especially the 200 million children suffering from protein and energy deficiencies. Delegates discussed the causes of the fact that as many as 88 countries fall within the category of low-income, food-deficit nations and suggested ways of improving the situation. In preparation for the World Food Summit due to take place in Rome in November 1996, where world leaders are expected to discuss food security, the world's parliamentarians expressed concern that the problem of food shortages had worsened since the 1974 World Food Conference.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin met with Sorour and other members of the Egyptian parliamentary delegation, and bilateral meetings were arranged between the head of the Egyptian delegation and chief delegates from Russia, Pakistan, South Korea, Jordan and Palestine as well as Speaker of the Israeli Knesset Dan Tichon. Sorour stressed that the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people should be acknowledged by the Israelis. He also expressed concern over the growing tension in the West Bank and Gaza.

## Moscow's NATO dread

Can the Kremlin's fear of NATO's expansion be mellowed even as Yeltsin languishes in his sick-bed, asks Abdel-Malek Khalil in Moscow

A four-day symposium on aerodynamics was convened in Moscow last week. Among the participants were experts from NATO's Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Development. In an unprecedented meeting, the group's experts talked to their Russian counterparts and tackled the thorny issue of the enlargement of NATO to include several former communist East European nations.

Russian officials have been bristling at NATO's eastward expansion. Russian Defence Minister Igor Rodionov warned recently that NATO's expansion could cause a suspension of the arms cuts stipulated by the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. Rodionov said that NATO was a product of Cold War times and threatened to take "adequate steps" if the expansion went ahead. "What can our feeling be if an army several times more powerful than our conventional defence forces in the West approaches our borders," Rodionov told reporters last week. "Russia is categorically against NATO's expansion, and if [the West] ignores Russia's opinion that means there will be no Europe we all have been dreaming about," Rodionov said in tones reminiscent of the Cold War era. He insisted that Europe must have a new security structure to reflect the post-Cold War period.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared that NATO's eastward expansion should not take place without a prior agreement between Russia and NATO. Last weekend, Rodionov briefed Yeltsin on the results of talks between Russia's defence minister and his American counterpart, William Perry. Rodionov told Perry that Russia wanted to continue working closely with the NATO-led peacekeeping operation in Bosnia.

The ailing Russian president promised, during his re-election campaign earlier this year, to end conscription and create a fully professional armed force by the turn of the century. How he is to do that before 2000 is still a mystery. Many Russian servicemen have not been paid for months.

In the meantime, the condition of the Russian president's heart worsens as a result of restricted blood flow to it caused by a hardening of the arteries. Yeltsin's heart condition will render bypass surgery not only dangerous but possibly useless, Russian cardiologists warned. Yeltsin's left ventricle has been damaged by ischaemic cardiomyopathy, a condition where low blood supply to the heart damages the organ's muscles. "If they brought me a patient off the street with an estimated success rate of less than 40 per cent I would be unlikely to carry out bypass surgery on him of my own free will," said heart expert Professor Boris Shabalkin of the Centre for Surgical Research in Moscow, in an apparent oblique reference to Yeltsin's poor condition. Yeltsin's chances of full recovery seem to be getting slimmer by the day.

## Water in world politics

Water has emerged as an increasingly touchy subject in international relations. Magdi Hefny outlines the ebb and flow of water politics

Fresh water is less plentiful than it was, as its uses have doubled in the last 50 years and are expected to double again by the turn of the century. The studies made so far confirm that water shortages and scarcity are already becoming a major problem in many developing countries. Egypt, which is experiencing rapid population growth, now uses 97 per cent of its available water resources with a per capita consumption of only 40 cubic metres per year. This represents one-fifth of Britain's per capita water supply. Moreover, Egypt's population is expected to swell from 54 million in 1990 to 94 million in 2025.

Water shortage is also a major problem in many other developing countries such as China, India, and Mexico, where it has already reached an alarming level. Having only eight per cent of the world's renewable water resources, China faces obvious water constraints to meet the demands of its population of over one billion. Hundreds of thousands of villages across India are suffering from water deficits, and their numbers are increasing. Parts of Mexico City have started sinking because of the drying of underground water bodies.

Rivers are the leading suppliers of water. Forty per cent of the world's population depends upon fresh water from rivers and about two-thirds of these people live in developing countries. Moreover, 214 of the world's first-order rivers are shared by two or more countries; 12 of these waterways are shared by five or more nations. As the population increases relative to available water resources, the maximum per capita demand that a country can support decreases correspondingly. The problem of water shortages and scarcity clearly calls for greater attention, as there is much potential for increasing competition and conflict among riparian countries, especially in the developing world where the demands of development impose additional pressures.

A statement at last year's International Conference on Water and the Environment recognised that water has an economic value in all its competing uses. The statement also underscored the basic right of all human beings to have access to clear water

and sanitation at an affordable price. In this regard, managing water as an economic commodity is an important way of achieving efficient and equitable use, and of encouraging conservation and protection.

If we compare oil with water, we will find very little similarity from the viewpoint of their strategic importance. Oil is only one major source of energy, but water cannot be replaced with any other alternative. As the opening citation from the Holy Qur'an states: "Every living being on earth is made from water." Oil prices are very high when compared with water costs. Accordingly, it makes economic sense to transfer oil over very long distances — but not water. Furthermore, water consumption, especially for agricultural purposes, is significantly higher than oil.

It has been argued that serious water quality deterioration could be considered the equivalent of a reduction in the quantity of water available for various uses in the future. The problem of water pollution is of concern now for many countries as human activities increase and more waste products contaminate available sources of surface and ground water. Among the major contaminants are untreated or partially treated sewage, agricultural chemicals and industrial effluents. Already many sources of water near urban centres in developing countries have been severely contaminated, thus impairing their potential safe use in a cost-effective manner.

Contamination of water resources is also a problem which could be transboundary in nature as we have seen in the recent tragic events of Rwanda, where the disposal of many dead bodies in Lake Victoria posed grave environmental problems for other countries bordering the lake. Efforts at the international level have been mounted to address water pollution problems in various conferences which dealt with water issues. International cooperation is an indispensable tool for dealing with such problems.

Another issue was raised recently by some social scientists and lawyers who have been arguing for sometime for a water convention similar to the conventions on the ozone layer and climate change, or

the Law of the Sea, on the basis that water is no different from such environmental issues. However, there are some fundamental differences. Water is more controllable than the ozone layer or climate. The depletion of the ozone layer and climate change will affect all nations but the problems associated with individual international water bodies are specific to the countries concerned. Accordingly, irrespective of whether a water convention is desirable or not, it has to be admitted that such a convention is likely to have little similarity to the ozone layer or climate change conventions. Ever since it was first discussed in the United Nations General Assembly in 1970, many nations have expressed their reservations as to whether a framework convention on water would be useful or even possible.

Geopolitical considerations and hydrological implications amongst the co-basin countries cannot be divorced from technical, legal, economic and environmental issues. Most states depend greatly on renewable resources: water, soil, fish and forests, which sustain much of their economic activity. However, transboundary river water resources have massive potential for bringing various state actors into a conflict situation. Almost all the major river systems, which are the primary suppliers of water to mankind, are shared by more than one state. When two or more countries are jointly dependent on the same river systems, upstream consumption and pollution might lead to conflict with downstream countries.

Every transboundary river is a potential source of cooperation or conflict. The possibilities for stability and peace among the riparian countries are intimately connected to development, as there exists a fundamental interdependence among these countries. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to the vulnerable geopolitical positions of downstream countries.

Uneven development of the states sharing the river watercourses, and the historical relations and experiences of these countries, can affect to a large extent the level of mutual trust between some of them. Consequently, there is a need to devise tools

and techniques for reconciling contradictory interests, and diverse attitudes and perceptions, which exist among riparian countries.

While there are international principles and rules that govern international river basins, these represent only broad guidelines. The studies undertaken so far indicate that progress in the legislative field is slower than desirable.

Until the middle of the 19th century, the governing principle was the Harmon Doctrine, which permitted the riparian state a free hand in the exercise of its sovereignty over the portion of the international river which passed through its territory. Gradually, the attitude that "rights" should be accompanied by certain "obligations" towards other riparian states received more prominence. The UN began preliminary studies on the issue in 1959. But the International Law Commission, an organ of the UN General Assembly, has had difficulties even in agreeing on the concept of an international river.

In Helsinki in 1966 the International Law Association, a non-governmental organisation based in London, established a set of rules providing guidelines for the utilisation and administration of international river basins. However, in 1973 the UN General Assembly invited the UN Environment Programme to develop guidelines. The draft principles developed in response to this invitation and forwarded to the General Assembly in 1978 were severely criticised by several upstream countries.

The UN conference on water held in Mar de la Plata, Argentina, in 1977, failed to reach agreement on how to strike a balance between sovereignty and responsibility on the part of neighbouring upstream countries on the one hand and downstream countries on the other, as well as the problem of confidentiality of water data, and so forth. This lack of success reflects the differences between the perceptions of upstream and downstream states, and the contradictory interests which are difficult to reconcile when such vital interests are at stake.

The writer is a former ambassador of Egypt to Ethiopia and currently assistant foreign minister for African affairs.



# Healthy climate for IMF accord

An agreement between Egypt and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), stalled for the past two years, is finally on the horizon. On 11 October, the IMF's executive board is expected to give the green light to a comprehensive reform programme, constituting the third phase of economic liberalisation and structural adjustment. The IMF's resident representative in Egypt speaks with **Ghada Ragab** on the concepts behind the terms of the agreement.



There were times when reporters were not received with open arms at the IMF resident representative's office, situated at the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) building, just across the corridor from the CBE governor's office.

This was the case before the two sides signed their 1991 agreement, and again when talks between them broke down in 1994 over differences on the pace of privatisation and IMF demands that Egypt devalue the pound.

At the time, both the IMF and the government accused the press of contributing to the crisis by exposing and expanding the disagreements.

But all that seems to be history. Today, with both sides optimistic that a new agreement is just around the corner, IMF Resident Representative in Cairo Arvind Subramanian cannot only afford to smile as he talks to reporters; he even allows them to use their tape recorders, something strictly forbidden by his predecessor.

Speaking with Al-Ahram Weekly on the new programme, Subramanian says measures taken by the government to deregulate investment and speed up privatisation have pushed the agreement through.

What are the terms of the agreement which the IMF executive board will review next week?

This is a 24-month Stand-By Arrangement. It envisages policy actions to be undertaken over the course of the two years and slightly beyond. The programme has quarterly reviews, which means that at the end of every three months the staff will review both quantitative performance under the programme as well as the structural policy actions.

In terms of the quantitative indicators or benchmarks — and this is true of all countries — we monitor the budget deficit and domestic financing of the budget. We also monitor liquidity growth but that is done by setting targets for the Central Bank, such as the net domestic assets and the net foreign reserve position.

What kind of financing is the IMF providing under the agreement?

We are providing what we call precautionary stand-by credit. This programme would allow the Egyptian government to draw about 270 million Special Drawing Rights (SDR), the equivalent of about \$400 million, should the need arise. But at the moment, Egypt does not envisage that it would need to draw on this amount because it does not have a balance of payments problem. Egypt is quite unique because the CBE has a healthy cushion of reserves.

What are the macro-economic and structural targets of this arrangement, and what are the procedures the agreement stipulates to help reach these targets?

What Egypt needs now is to increase growth rates to 7-8 per cent. Working backwards, Egypt's current rate of investment is 17 per cent of GDP, and you need to increase this rate to between 23-25 per cent of GDP. This, in turn, means that you need that much savings in order to be able to finance the investments. Now given these objectives, the programme envisages a two-pronged policy attack to raise investment savings and to increase the efficiency of the economy.

We have a macro-economic reform programme in place that will ensure that Egypt's recent track record of stabilising the major financial variables continues. This means that budget deficit is kept under control, inflation is brought down further, and money growth is kept under check. This kind of financial stability will have two effects. First, it will provide the stable environment that is so important to attracting investment. Second, by having a tight budget, you hope that the government will do more savings, at least initially, to finance the increase in investment. So we see that in the initial years, the major impact on savings is going to come from the government.

The second, and very important pillar of the programme, is the series of structural reforms. The premise here is that Egypt has had a highly protected, highly investment unfriendly and public sector dominated economy.

The aim of the structural reforms is to raise the economy's competitiveness, make it a more investment friendly environment, and thereby hope to attract more investment, particularly more foreign direct investment and technology.

What are the major items on the structural reform agenda?

First, we have an accelerated programme of privatising the non-financial public sector. Here, the targets under the programme are completely consistent with what the government has already announced for itself. The government is going to accelerate this programme and this is what we will be monitoring.

The second element of the programme is trade reform. Egypt has amongst the highest tariff rates in the world. Over the course of the programme, we envisage major tariff reductions.

The third aim of the programme is strengthening the financial sector which involves further privatisation of the banks, especially joint venture banks and maybe something beyond the joint ventures, de-

pending on how things go, ensuring that Egyptian banks conform to certain international prudential regulations, and generally ensuring that the government is able to conduct its monetary policy more efficiently.

The fourth element of structural reform is deregulation, which is how to make Egypt a more investment-friendly environment. The government is contemplating an investment law that will bring together regulations pertaining to investment and investment incentives.

Under the framework of deregulation, the government is also taking actions to liberalise the cotton sector. Last year things were somewhat unruly and chaotic, and this year, both domestic and international marketing of cotton will take place without restrictions.

Why is cotton singled out as a sector, while Egypt's exports of the crop are small and it is no longer much of a cash crop at least in terms of export revenues?

Cotton continues to be an important sector. It is still one of the main agricultural crops, it provides a lot of sustenance to farmers and also is used as an input in the local textile industry. Under the previous Extended Fund Facility agreement with the IMF, Egypt was committed to full liberalisation of the cotton sector, but this was never fulfilled. Given the fact that the government was doing this in any case, we thought we would include it in the programme because it constitutes the deregulation of a very important sector.

What are the plans for fiscal reform?

Fiscal reform is the final pillar of structural reform. Egypt needs an efficient and modern fiscal system, founded on a few important principles: any system of taxation should be broad-based, which allows you to have lower rates. The narrower the base the higher the rates, which penalises investors. The system should be transparent and you try to ensure that there is a proper combination of direct and indirect taxes. The agreement includes transforming the current sales tax into a full-fledged value added tax, which has a number of advantages.

In the medium term, the aim is to have an improved system of income tax. Currently, tax rates are high, the tax base is narrow and there are a number of exemptions. So a rationalisation of the income tax system is also part of the programme. On the income tax system the agreement is not very detailed because it is something the government itself is working on, so we need to discuss that further with the government, and jointly formulate an action plan.

What is the aim of this tax reform?

Basically, to modernise the system, make it conform to certain important principles of taxation and provide an atmosphere that is conducive to investment. Through the income tax reform, you want to lower tax rates, rationalise taxes, make the administration more simple.

So the objective is not to raise taxes?

No, there are no tax rises at all for the year 1996-97, and the objective of the income tax reform is very much to try and lower taxes, rationalise, simplify, and make them transparent and simpler to administer.

How do you view the "friendly tax man" attitude adopted by the new government in an attempt to win over taxpayers and investors?

It is a good attitude. As long as you combine the fiscal rigour of the past two years and you ensure that the tax system is not unfriendly and is not an investment deterrent without compromising the need to raise a certain amount of revenue in the most efficient way possible.

What plans does the programme encompass in terms of price liberalisation?

There are no plans for price liberalisations for the year 1996-97. We are working with the constraints that the government has set, that in 1996-97 there will be no tax increases, no price increases.

Does the agreement provide for a new social safety net to help absorb the impact of the reform programme other than the Social Fund for Development (SFD) established in 1991 when Egypt first launched its liberalisation programme?

No, the new programme depends on the SFD, which was established to try and cushion the short-term adverse consequences of the structural reform. In the first phase, there was not that much structural reform going on. But with the renewed commitment to structural reform and, therefore, greater likelihood of short-term impact from measures such as privatisation and trade liberalisation, the SFD has re-equipped itself to fulfill its original mission. Over the next three years, some \$150-200 million will be devoted to severance and compensation packages, retraining and redeployment of personnel.

Trade liberalisation and less tariff protection, at least in the short-term, will no doubt have negative effects on producers. Do you think this could defeat the purpose of the programme by hav-

ing an adverse effect on investments?

More important than the quantity of investment is where investments are going to go. People only think of tariff reduction in terms of what it will do to domestic industry. It is important to remember that tariff reductions are tax reductions and will bring lower prices for all segments of society and will put more purchasing power in the hands of the consumer.

On the other hand, it is inevitable that when you reduce tariffs you expose domestic producers to greater competition. But the tariff cuts are not going to be so drastic that they will make industries go bust. The programme envisages a gradual reduction over time so that domestic producers have time to plan and to adjust to the competition.

Trade liberalisation encourages investment to flow into the most competitive sectors. In a protected economy all the resources flow into sectors protected by high tariff barriers and are highly inefficient. Tariffs create an anti-export bias because they encourage resources to flow away from sectors where you have natural comparative advantage, the export sector. Trade liberalisation gives investors the signal to move into export sectors.

Does the programme provide for any changes in the exchange rate system?

The government has a market-based system to determine exchange rates. In the course of the programme, exchange rates will be determined by market pressures, taking into account the need to prevent deterioration in the economy's competitiveness.

How does the programme provide for dealing with the local debt?

Egypt's gross local debt is LE125 billion, or about 57 per cent of GDP. The debt needs to be brought down gradually. This will have an impact on the budget, because the interest payments on the budget then become more manageable.

At the moment interest payments absorb a fair amount of government spending. This comes into the agreement in several ways. Because we envisage tight budgetary policies, the government is not going to significantly add to its debt. The treasury bonds that the government has issued will only replace the treasury bills that have circulated since the beginning of the reform programme. Over the new programme period, the internal debt as a proportion of income will decline both because interest rates should come down and because you are not going to be borrowing

## IFC comes through on Egypt pledge

Releasing its annual report last week, the International Finance Corporation says it is committed to supporting private investment and attracting more foreign capital to Egypt

## The show goes on

Despite a heightening of regional tension, the organisers of the Cairo economic summit are going ahead with their plans, writes **Ghada Ragab**

Despite an escalating war of words between Egypt and Israel, a conflict matched only by the rocks and bullets flying about in the Palestinian territories, preparations for the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit (MENA III) are on track, say officials at the World Economic Forum, the conference's organiser.

Speaking to a panel of Egyptian reporters on Worldnet Dialogue, a satellite hook-up through the United States Information Agency's Worldnet network, WEF board member Gregory Blatt said although there is a possibility that the conference may be postponed, it is unlikely to be cancelled altogether in light of President Hosni Mubarak's assurances that Egypt was moving ahead with conference plans.

"We have been asking ourselves for the past few weeks whether, given the recent political circumstances, it is still appropriate to have a conference," Blatt said. "I agree the economic dimension (of peace) cannot come before the political process, but it can keep a strong momentum. Perhaps it is not the time for large regional projects, but at least we can get businessmen talking."

During a one-hour question and answer session with reporters from Al-Ahram Weekly, Al-Ahram and Egyptian Television, Blatt said that so far, about 650 international companies have registered for the conference, and the WEF is still receiving applications from other countries in the region.

The MENA III summit is the third in a series of conferences held in Casablanca in 1994 and Amman in 1995. These meetings aim at achieving intra-regional economic cooperation to cement the peace process, as well as attracting interested foreign investors. This would give economic reform and development initiatives the necessary push to counter the after effects of decades of war and instability.

The WEF is making a special effort to ensure the participation of the Palestinian private sector, Blatt said, especially after Palestinian business representatives announced their refusal to participate in the conference until significant progress is made in the peace process. He said the WEF is dedicating conference sessions to discussing problems confronting the Palestinian economy, and is trying to include Palestinian business representatives in all events of the party.

"I don't think the Palestinians will gain anything by boycotting the summit," Blatt stated. "In fact, it would be something of a missed opportunity if they do not attend, because this is the type of forum where they can voice their concerns."

Blatt said that so far, about 70 Israeli companies have registered for the conference, some participating for the first time. However, he noted, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stressed that all Israeli projects presented at MENA III will have been discussed with the Egyptian government beforehand to ensure that they are "politically correct".

Just one week after the publication of its 1995-1996 report, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private sector arm, delivered on a promise made in the report to prove its commitment to supporting private investment in Egypt. The IFC's pledge was realised through the publication of an index for the Egyptian stock market. The *Egypt Index*, which tracks the daily performance of the stock market, is carried by major financial news services and publications as of 1 October.

"The IFC index is a key source of information used by international investors interested in emerging markets," Tarek Allouba, senior projects officer at the IFC's Cairo office, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

At the beginning of next year, Egypt will also be included in the IFC's Global Composite Index, which weighs countries according to volume of trading and capitalisation of their stock markets relative to other markets. Allouba says the inclusion of Egypt into this index was in response to the rapid growth of the market, as well as mounting international investor interest in Egypt as an investment destination.

The publication of the *Egypt Index* coincided with the release of the IFC's annual report last week. According to the report, the agency last year approved investment in a wide range of activities in Egypt. These investments include \$47 million for the development

of the Oasim Concession in the Western Desert, a project which should lead to the production of 30,000 barrels of oil per day. The IFC is also contributing \$900,000 to the capital of the first financial leasing company, which is being established with the Japanese ORIX Group, ORIX leasing of Pakistan, the National Bank of Egypt and the Commercial International Investment Company.

The IFC has also provided the National Bank of Egypt with a risk management facility which will enable the bank to hedge against interest rate and currency risks. The agency has also provided the Alexandria Iron and Steel Company with a risk management facility to hedge against foreign currency exposure.

IFC investment in Egypt at the end of June 1996 stood at \$165 million.

According to Allouba, the IFC aims to attract both direct and portfolio foreign investment to Egypt by participating in promising projects and providing information about the Egyptian capital market.

Further indicating its interest in Egypt as an emerging market, the IFC has participated in the establishment of a Country Fund for Egypt, contributing \$5 million to the fund's \$74 million capital. The Egypt Trust Fund, listed in London and managed by Lazard Freres, limits itself to investing in listed Egyptian securities.

"The fund is considered an excellent vehicle to attract foreign

portfolio investment to Egypt," Allouba said.

IFC plans for the current fiscal year include further involvement in private sector projects. Having encouraged the government to open the infrastructure to private investment, a policy which the government has recently adopted, the IFC is planning to participate in the first private sector power generation plant. The agency will announce its plans in this regard after the government makes its choice from among the 34 bids presented for the power plant, said Allouba.

Also a proponent of privatisation, the IFC is gearing up to participate in financing privatised industries when anchor investors are involved, and when the sell-

ing process is linked to a programme to modernise and develop the industry. In March, during his last visit to Egypt, World Bank President James Wolfensohn told reporters that the World Bank, in urging the Egyptian government to speed up the privatisation process, is prepared to put its money where its mouth is by financing privatised projects.

Although Allouba would not specify any companies in which the IFC is interested, he said they are watching the market closely for privatisation in the cement and tourism industries. The IFC is also planning to participate in setting up new financial institutions, especially when foreign investors are involved.

### Market report

#### Upward trend continues

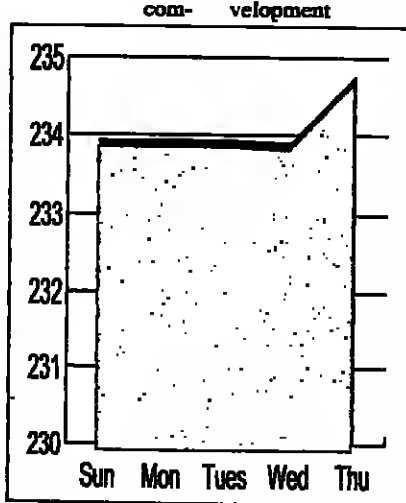
THE GENERAL Capital Market Index maintained its upward trend during the week ending 26 September, gaining 0.88 points to settle at 233.91. The volume of transactions jumped to LE430 million. The market turnover was LE267.157 million up from the previous week.

Milling companies continued to be the market's best performers. Floating 40 per cent of its shares, Upper Egypt Mills captured 39.62 per cent of the volume of total market transactions as it traded LE170.680 million worth of shares. Furthermore, the number of shares changing hands, 4.267 million, represented 39.67 per cent of total market transactions. Meanwhile, the flotation of the 40 per cent stake of East Delta Flour Mills was highly oversubscribed during the two day subscription period. LE94.39 million worth of shares were sold, closing at LE31 per share compared to an opening price of LE10.

Memphis Pharmaceutical and Chemical Industries captured a LE11 increase per share to close at LE61. With

an increase of 42.95 percent, Pfizer Egypt was the market's biggest gainer, ending at LE15.01.

The financial sector index rose by 2.1 points to close at 285.67. Credit International of Egypt achieved an increase of LE65.01 to close at LE305. Shares of both Medinat Nasr Housing and Development



(MNH) and Helopolis Housing and Development (HHID) gained LE7 each. MNHD closed at LE142.5 while HHID closed at LE103. However, it was not such a good week for all companies. Mid East Land Reclamation (Milex) was the market's biggest loser. Declining by 31.25 percent, its shares closed at LE2.75. Ameriya Cement plunged LE4.98 to settle at LE57.02. Kafr Al-Zayat Pesticides lost LE1.85 to end at LE48. Misr International Bank (MIB) ended LE7.01 lower to close at LE366. Commercial International Bank (CIB) lost LE5, closing at LE470.

In general, the share value of 25 companies declined, 30 increased while share prices of 28 other companies remained the same.

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# Expo 96-Alexandria 2-3 Oct.



## Expo 96: An example of US-Egyptian co-operation

USAID is holding its annual exhibition in Alexandria, the gathering of investors, businessmen and bankers. Expo 96, which will witness the exhibition is being held

In the framework of the Egyptian-US partnership.

The imports programme assisted many companies in benefitting from the sum of US\$200 million granted annually by the United States. Through this programme, joint ventures will be carried out by Egyptian commercial banks. The programme provides private sector companies with either medium or long-term facilities, with financing given at a fixed US dollar exchange rate, interest-free and a suitable grace period. This sum will be directed to the importation of US commodities with the payment for these commodities in US dollars.

Free zone companies with

more than 40 per cent of its shares owned by public sector companies are not entitled to benefit from this programme.

The minimum cost of the project is \$10,000 while the maximum is \$5 million.

This maximum can be increased provided that a written consent is given from the Ministry of International Cooperation.

Expo 96 is the best example of the Egyptian-US partnership. The programme provides incentives for Egyptian businessmen to purchase equipment and commodities from the United States, and at the same time encourages American importers to invest in Egypt.

Compiled by:

Bahaa Bakr and Mamdoh Abdel-Qader

## US Chamber of Commerce fostering ties

OF THE 15 thousand organisations registered as non-governmental, the US Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, since its founding in 1982, is one of the organisations whose activities have had a great influence in developing economic ties between Egypt and the United States.

The chamber is considered an important centre for bringing together American and Egyptian businessmen, with the aim of finding suitable solutions to problems facing these businessmen.

Last year the chamber opened an office in Washington, known as the American-Egyptian Chamber of Commerce, which provided direct connections between Egyptian businessmen and their American counterparts. A new branch was also opened in Alexandria, which caters to the most elite businessmen there.

Among the activities of the chamber is to hold dinner meetings between leading businessmen and political figures. 19 specialized committees meet annually, and publish their minutes in 16 economic journals. The chamber also publishes tens of studies and reports focusing on economic developments in Egypt, to which investors and businessmen from all corners of the globe have access via the Internet.

The chamber also arranges annual visits to the United States to meet American business men and congressmen, as well as managers of American companies. Likewise, the chamber also organises trips to different coun-

tries of the world with the aim of developing Egyptian exports, and organises international conferences to attract foreign investors to Egypt.



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## Investors Association to develop Borg El-Arab

PRESIDENT of the Investors Organisation and chairman of Faragallah Co, Mohamed Farag Amer, announced that the organisation has decided to build a private bank for Borg El-Arab City as a part of its development plans for the city. The bank will fund investment and industrial projects to create job opportunities, and increase investments for a better standard of living and to raise individual income. Four million Egyptian pounds have been earmarked for the project.

Amer added that an area of 2000 sq. m. has been reserved for the headquarters of the organisation. The building to be constructed will have a conference centre and a permanent exhibition for industrial products. The building, which is expected to be finished within a year, will also have 12 guest rooms for visiting experts.

The organisation has also been undertaking social activities for the city, among which is an orphanage with a capacity of 450 children. German and Austrian specialists will be hired to teach in the orphanage. The organisation also donated 250 desks for schools in Borg El-Arab.

Amer also said that the organisation is combating illiteracy within the city. Women have begun learning reading and writing skills. Amer added that the relationship between Egyptian and American investors is strong enough to fi-

nance the Egyptian private sector especially in raw materials, machines, and other requirements renovate and develop the manufacturers there, which will create exporting opportunities.

Amer confirmed that Faragallah products have made an impact on markets worldwide, earning international certificates for their good quality. New production lines will appear shortly to export more food and agricultural products to different countries around the world. Faragallah's export goods are expected to reach \$75 million.

### American Chamber Of Commerce In Egypt

Limitless efforts  
to boost U.S - Egyptian  
and  
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## Faragallah in Expo 96



US ambassador in Cairo Robert Walker and Dr John Wesley, head of US Aid listening to Eng. Mohamed Farag Amer, chairman of Faragallah Group before the Jet freezer, which freezes meat in two minutes only

Faragallah Group is taking part this year in EXPO 96 which is organized by the U.S Aid The two day event will take place in the former- U.S consulate premises in Alexandria. Faragallah was granted the African Award in Dakkar 1996 and the Quality Award of Europe 1996

Mohamed Farag Amer will receive the award in France in a celebration held on this occasion on 29 Oct.

This year Faragallah Co. received the ISO 9002 and the Quality Award too

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## Al-Ahram Weekly

### Photo op summit

As Arafat, Netanyahu and King Hussein converge on Washington, another opportunity to discuss the peace process arises. But, as President Clinton noted after extending his apologies for not attending, "Negotiate with?"

Netanyahu seems to have already unilaterally redefined the terms and provisions of Oslo or, is taking it for granted that Jerusalem's final status is Israeli. That much is apparent in light of the opening of the archaeological tunnel and the closing of the Palestinian Authority offices in the city.

He also seeks to end the violence that has claimed dozens of lives over the past few days. To this end, as he is seated across from Arafat, Israeli helicopter gunships and tanks forcibly contain a Palestinian people who have all but lost faith that peace, or at least Israel's version of it, will bring about anything but more massacres.

When deciding on a venue for the summit, Netanyahu strongly favoured Washington over Cairo, fearing that a conference in Egypt would result in the pressuring of Israel to concede to terms already agreed upon by the previous Israeli government. A Washington summit, however, would be a safer bet. The Jewish lobby, after all, is unlikely to encourage Clinton to do anything that may diminish from Israel's "sacred" rights. In short, the conference is another photo op for Clinton where he can win a few electoral points by appearing presidential. It is also another chance for Netanyahu to drive his point home — one that says to the world in no unclear terms that for the violence and bloodshed to end, peace must be realised along lines acceptable to Israel.

But for the Arabs, and all those who earnestly believe in a just and comprehensive peace, it is merely another opportunity to say what has already been said before. For violence to end, for stability to finally triumph over turmoil, commitment to the already agreed upon principles remains the only true path to peace. Should Netanyahu fail to come to terms with this reality, the only outcome will be more carnage and he, allegedly a major world leader, will be even more responsible for the death of peace than was Yigal Amir.

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# Fire in the tinderbox

As recent tragic events make clear, writes **James Zogby**, the policies pursued by Binyamin Netanyahu during his first 100 days in office may well shatter the remains of a fragile and fractured peace process

The explosion that rocked Palestine last week was tragically destined to occur. Long-term unemployment affecting 70 per cent of the population, continued land confiscation, road and settlement building, humiliating restrictions on movement and commerce, the denial of basic rights and Israel's refusal to implement even elementary provisions of the Oslo Accords — all of these combined to provide the tinderbox. The latest Israeli provocation in Jerusalem provided the spark.

Whether by design or not, Netanyahu's provocation have resurrected the "old Middle East", albeit in a potentially more dangerous form. It was the hope of peacemakers that the process would be contagious. Peace between Israel and the Palestinians, it was assumed, would speed up and give birth to a "new Middle East". This was the hope, for example, of the Casablanca and Amman economic summits.

But building peace was like constructing a building. In this case the building was an inverted pyramid — an inherently unstable structure — its base resting in the sands of Gaza and the rocky hills of the West Bank. The other "bricks" of the peace process and prospects for regional co-operation and development were the second and third storeys.

If the foundation collapsed, the entire edifice would crumble on top of it.

Netanyahu's actions in his first 100 days reveal not only a set of policies designed to chip away at an unfinished and precarious foundation, but insidious fissures that threaten the entire structure.

Not only have the Palestinians exploded, the broader Arab world has erupted in anger as well. If Netanyahu hoped to maintain the benefits of the edifice of peace — relations with Egypt and Jordan, international acceptance and co-operation, and increased economic assistance — while destroying the foundation that made

that all possible, he will, it appears, be frustrated in his efforts.

If official and unofficial Arab reaction has been indicative of anything over the past few weeks, it has been to make clear that peace with the Palestinians is the sine qua non for a broader Middle East peace. If peace could be contagious, so could its absence.

When Netanyahu was elected, Arabs were told to "wait and see." "He might," it was said, "turn out to be Nixon to China." Having waited 100 days, Arabs have seen instead an Israeli prime minister who seems to be modelling himself after Ronald Reagan, disdainful of compromise and seeking instead a confrontation to "bring down the evil empire."

Netanyahu, of course, is not Reagan; and the Arab world is not the "evil empire." Rather, the current prime minister of Israel is the inheritor of a peace process and series of agreements. He is not, as he believes, a major player who can reshape the world. Rather, he is a participant in a process the success of which is dependent upon the participation of all actors working together.

But peace is not Israel's alone. It is not merely an Arab-Israeli peace process, but an international process in which many nations have an interest and a say.

And so it is no surprise that the explosion in Palestine rocked European capitals and Washington politics as well. Politically, the Middle East peace process was one of the Clinton administration's major goals and most highly touted foreign policy accomplishment. On several occasions the president has noted how strongly invested the US is in the completion of the Middle East peace process. Accepting the strategic view of the Bush-Baker team that engineered Madrid, the current administration understands that the US has a vital national security interest in Middle East peace. At stake are

the security and stability of US allies and interests in the region.

Though constrained by long-term practice born of domestic politics (especially in a presidential year), the Clinton administration has repeatedly but privately warned Netanyahu to avoid provocation and flashpoints. Additionally, it has also insisted that the new Israeli government honour commitments made by the prior government. And while agreeing to give the new government time to find its political course and resolve political differences, the Clinton team has reaffirmed the US commitment to a comprehensive peace.

Faced now with a crisis just four weeks before a critical national election, the administration responded by restoring those principles.

From recent discussions with administration officials, it is clear that they grasp the urgency of the current crisis.

If there is any serious fault to be found in the administration's response, it has been the oblique nature of its public position. Even here, it is clear that the Israeli press has deciphered the code and correctly read that the administration holds Netanyahu responsible for the provocation and disruption of the peace process. But Arab critics are right to note that, in failing to clearly assign blame, the administration appears to give Netanyahu undeserved breathing space and fails to give Palestinians a clear enough sense of hope that the US is committed to guaranteeing their rights.

Presently, the US administration is insisting that the Israelis make a "dramatic gesture" to restore Palestinian confidence in the process. But serious questions remain as to whether or not private diplomacy will work with a Likud government. In the past, only public diplomacy has forced Israeli governments to move and only public pressure has given Arabs confidence that the US is committed to a balanced and fair peace

process. A more assertive US role can be instrumental in putting together the shattered peace process.

But in this struggle to restart the peace process, the Arabs are not powerless. While the administration assesses the current danger to the process and the potential damage to the entire region if this crisis escalates, it is imperative that the Arab world take action. Arab leaders should reaffirm their commitment to comprehensive peace and to their demand that peace be based on adherence to agreements reached as well as full Israeli reciprocity and accountability for its actions.

Arab pressure on the US and Israel could be helpful if positively and constructively applied. Given the dialectic interaction that binds the parties to one another, the actions of each directly affects the others. Just as Netanyahu's provocation can cause disruption in the broader region, Arab actions could counter such negative policies. A clear message must be sent, for example, to the Israeli business community that the benefits of peace are dependent upon continued progress on the path toward peace. Constructive Arab pressure on Israel could be instrumental in provoking an internal Israeli debate regarding the actions of the government.

The explosion in Palestine is a tragedy born of anger and despair. In itself, it is no solution; but it might be a step on the road to finding a solution. If any lasting good can come from the new tragedy that has befallen the Palestinian people, it will be in a unified Arab stand to change the negative dynamic within Israel and to press the US to be more assertive in preserving its direct investment in a just, comprehensive, and mutually beneficial peace.

The author is the president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.

## Jerusalem: shared sovereignty

Netanyahu's provocative act in Jerusalem last week is a gauntlet thrown in the face of the whole international community. **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** asks whether the world will rise to the challenge

The violence rocking Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza since Netanyahu's orders to complete the last stretch of controversial archaeological tunnel passing beneath Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third holiest site, were carried out ten days ago exposing the vulnerability of the Arab-Israeli peace process. It has also highlighted a number of issues that bear closer scrutiny.

The first is Israel's contention that it should wield exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem. Although successive Israeli governments have conceded that Muslims and Christians will exercise a degree of supervision over their holy places in the city, recent events prove that an Israeli monopoly of political sovereignty over Jerusalem is an untenable proposition. According to the Israelis, the decision to extend the tunnel was taken for purely religious reasons having no religious — or political — connotations. Even if we go along with this ludicrous statement, which is clearly belied by Netanyahu's orders to carry out the extension under cover of darkness, the fact remains that when administrative decisions touch on explosive religious issues they acquire a highly political character. The only way to prevent them from setting off a chain reaction of violence like the one that rocked the region last week is through a balanced political mechanism

which gives the contending parties equal decision-making powers. It was precisely the absence of such a mechanism that made last Tuesday's Washington summit between Clinton, Netanyahu and Arafat imperative.

Differences over issues of a religious character, which touch deeply on identity problems, are by definition highly volatile. Their emotional nature makes them much more resistant to rational conflict-resolution methods than political differences. When problems are not solved in the political arena, animosities are often transferred to the religious domain. Unless sovereign prerogatives are shared by the contending parties, no counterbalancing mechanism exists to avert worst-case scenarios. This factor alone is enough to justify joint Israeli-Palestinian sovereignty over Jerusalem, which should become the capital of both peoples. Last week's events graphically illustrate the dangers inherent in allowing Israel to retain exclusive sovereignty over the Holy City, which risks becoming a permanent source of conflict and renewal of tension.

A second, no less important, lesson to be drawn from the new Intifada is that if the peace process does not move forward it will not remain stationary, but will actually regress. Meaningful peace negotiations ground to a virtual standstill following the Hamas bombings in Israel and

the Qana massacre in southern Lebanon. Inventing mechanisms like the Sham El-Sheikh summit to reaffirm a global commitment to the success of the peace process cannot be a substitute for real negotiations. Since coming to power, Netanyahu has reneged on many of the fundamental principles laid down in Madrid to govern the peace negotiations. He is fond of voicing his commitment to peace, but a verbal commitment is meaningless if it is not backed by concrete steps to affirm it. Worse, he has used the reaction to the tunnel incident to himself instigate to not only freeze any movement on a deployment in Hebron, but to militarily re-occupy the West Bank towns previously handed over to the Palestinian Authority, thereby to all intents and purposes cancelling Oslo II.

Another important lesson relates to a very special feature of the Arab-Israeli conflict and how it reflects on the peace process. In my last article, I wrote that the Arab-Israeli conflict differs from other historic conflicts in that out all its protagonists have enjoyed a historical/geographical continuum in the region. The creation of Israel entailed the dispossession of an indigenous population that had lived on the land for centuries, and so political trends in the Arab world will continue to challenge the legitimacy of Israel's presence in the heart of the Arab world as long as Israel refuses to find a proper solution to the Palestinian problem which, of course, includes the issue of Jerusalem.

Events since the Madrid conference prove that a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for the peace process to move forward is the sustained active intervention of the international community, particularly the great powers. Whatever progress has been achieved so far is thanks to the encouragement and blessing of the great powers. To begin a re-appraisal of the achievements of the process today entails a re-appraisal of the conditions endorsed by the international community as a valid basis for a solution to the conflict. Is Netanyahu, who is today questioning the fundamentals of the peace process, ready to assume the responsibility of flying in the face of this global consensus?

The violence sparked off by what Muslims saw as a threat to one of their most sacred shrines has once again thrust Jerusalem into the forefront of the world stage, both as a source of regional conflict and in terms of its global importance as a Holy City not only for Jews, but also for Muslims and Christians who represent the two most widespread monotheistic religions on earth.

Given the exceptional character of the events in Jerusalem this week, the writer's second article on "Boycotting Israel" has been postponed to a future issue.

### "Security first" exploded

By Naguib Mahfouz

Recent events in Palestine carry unavoidable echoes of the pre-Oslo conflict, a situation for which the current Israeli prime minister can be held almost single-handedly responsible.

Israel's prime minister appears deaf to any language other than the language of violence. The peace process ground to a halt as soon as Netanyahu came to power. Peace has retreated, and because the world does not stand still, it remains abandoned in precisely the place it found itself on the eve of Netanyahu's election victory.

The latest bloody incidents cannot, therefore, affect this peace negatively. Indeed, quite the opposite may prove to be true. Recent events may well oblige those who deserted peace in the first place to re-evaluate their options since it has become patently obvious that peace is not a mixed bag from which certain bits can be picked and others ignored. Peace is peace, and its opposite is not a maintenance of the status quo.

Netanyahu has consistently insisted on security first and peace — perhaps — later. What is now occurring in Israel sounds the death knell of such a hopelessly unrealistic position. Has the security first policy brought security to Israel? Can we consider the current situation in the Occupied Territories secure?

It is up to the Israeli prime minister to now review his own position and save his nation from the fury exploding in his people's faces.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.



### The Press This Week

**Akhbar El-Yomi:** "Observers all agree that opening the tunnel was 'the straw that broke the camel's back'. This stupid and provocative action could have been rapidly contained had Netanyahu dealt with the Palestine National Authority and the Palestinian people as partners in the peace process. But ever since he sat on the 'throne' of Israel, he has done nothing but provoke and humiliate the Palestinians while trying to marginalise the role of the PNA." (Ibrahim Se'ida, 28 September)

**Al-Ahram:** "It is inevitable that peace supporters inside Israel... will regain their strength, having seen the fruits of Likud delusions and extremism — a time bomb which will explode in the hands of its manufacturer." (Ibrahim Nefie, 30 September)

**Al-Gomhuria:** "It seems that the only thing Netanyahu learnt from his predecessors was ensuring that his record in power should include tragedy, massacre, aggression, deliberate murder, genocide. He seems to think that this is his only gate into Jewish history. He forgets that this same gate could be his way out of that history and of politics. I believe he needs to re-read, carefully, the history of his nation and its leaders." (Mahfouz El-Ansari, 28 September)

**Al-Arab:** "What is required today is for us to seize this historical opportunity for the Palestinian people to regain some of their power... Do not about the Intifada with talk about a false peace. Do not say let us put out the fire and see... Palestine should once more become the central issue because Israel is 'the central enemy'... and the word 'liberation' should re-appear in our vocabulary... The worst danger is to ignore the sources of Arab strength which the Israeli premier thinks do not go beyond rhetoric. We must prove the contrary and use the language he understands." (Mahmoud El-Maraghi, 30 September)

**Al-Mussawir:** "The Arabs have given Netanyahu every opportunity to change his hard-line stances. They have offered everything, stressing that a comprehensive peace is a strategic option to be pursued by everyone. They have indicated a willingness to understand the problems of Israeli security within a balanced framework for a genuine settlement based on the land-for-peace formula. But Netanyahu in fact does seek neither peace nor security. He wants the Arabs to sign a surrender document recognising his sovereignty over the Golan and the West Bank and give

### The last straw

up their rights in Arab Jerusalem!" (Mahfouz Mohamed Ahmed, 27 September)

**Al-Ahali:** "The special relationship between Egypt and the US is well known. It lacks equality and independence and Washington has always used economic aid to tame Egyptian policies and harness them to serve American interests. No one asks that Egyptian foreign policy should be hostile to the US; we only ask that alternatives should be sought so as to free this policy of such pressures, so that Washington allows Cairo what it allows itself — defending its own interests!" (Amina El-Nagash, 25 September)

**Rose El-Youssef:** "Since the advent of Netanyahu all the Arab regimes have been asking: how do we pressure him? How do we force him into speaking with a civilised tongue? Experts have given no decisive answers: Washington, the Cairo economic summit, vitriolic newspaper headlines, Israeli peace groups. The answers left out one definitive suggestion — the Arab peoples, the ignored and absent instrument of power. Arab governments dread their peoples and are, therefore, disarmed in confrontations with Netanyahu — unable to reply to his accusations and insolence." (Adel Hamouda, 30 September)

**Al-Wafd:** "The idea of a meeting between the Israeli premier and President Mubarak in Cairo, described by the former as a 'good idea', is not good at all. It should be rejected and ignored without hesitation. Netanyahu does not deserve the chance after proving that he stands against peace in word and deed, disregarding the feelings and rights of others and respecting no one — listening only to the sound of his own voice. Through this visit he only hopes to quell the Intifada so that he can continue building settlements and Judaising Jerusalem." (Magdi Mehanna, 28 September)

**Al-Akhbar:** "Promises can no longer put out the fires which have erupted everywhere in Palestine and every Islamic country. This revolution can only be put out if Israel retreats and honours the commitments it denies — by closing the tunnel near the Al-Aqsa Mosque and releasing all political prisoners in Israel." (Mustafa Amin, 29 September)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



It is the heroism of those Palestinians who fell prey over the last few days to the bullets of the Israeli army that I have sought to depict this week, since it is the figure of the Palestinian martyr whose shadow is once again cast over the Arab world, indeed, over the international stage.

كنا من الأصل



## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### No change with Netanyahu

It should cause little if any surprise that President Mubarak has decided not to attend the Washington summit. A few hours before the opening of the summit there was still no indication that Netanyahu's government was willing to meet any of the Palestinian demands that have followed outbreaks of violence in Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories. Nor are there any indications that the Clinton administration will be able to alter the position of its ally. Given the unlikelihood of the summit producing any positive results, then, it looks as if Netanyahu will go down in history as the Israeli prime minister who succeeded in undermining America's credibility as well as that of his own government.

Since the beginnings of the crisis President Mubarak and Yasser Arafat have agreed that a meeting with Netanyahu was not in itself an objective. Their aims, rather, have been to agree on certain defined objectives by which Israel would commit itself to carrying out agreements it has already signed and thus eliminate the root causes of the present conflict in the occupied territories.

Israel's recent excavation of the tunnel beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque was merely the straw that broke the camel's back, yet one more example of Netanyahu's determination to treat Arabs and Palestinians, with indifference and to brush their concerns, whether over the evacuation of Hebron and other towns of the West Bank as well as over the future of Jerusalem, beneath the carpet.

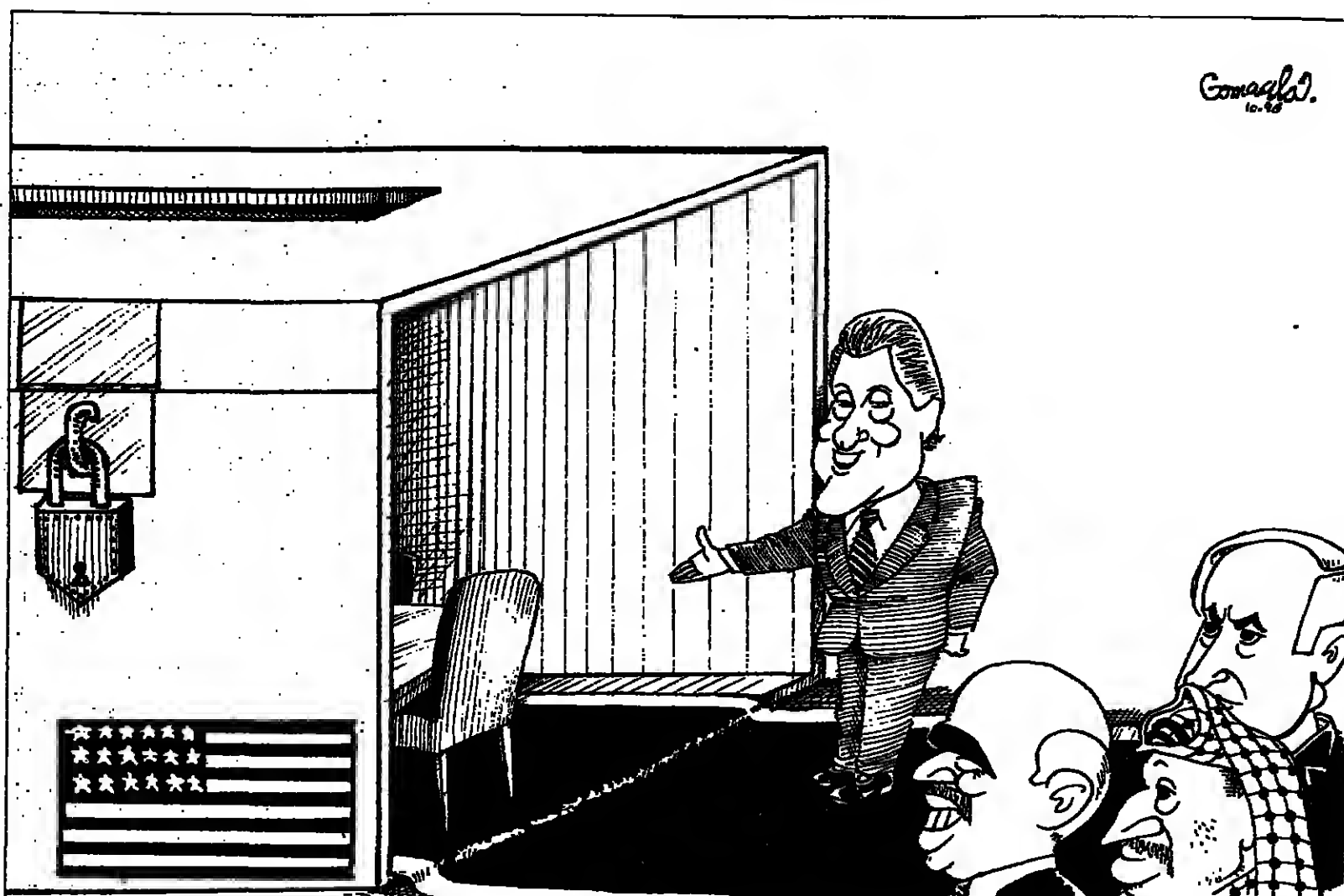
Certainly the Arabs are partly to blame for this situation since they presented the Israeli prime minister with sufficient justification to believe that he could freeze the peace process and abandon the commitments contained in the Oslo and Cairo Agreements with impunity. And even while Netanyahu was busy indicating that he did not intend peace in the way the Arab parties did, they continued to treat him with the utmost goodwill. Meetings between Arafat and Netanyahu and between Israeli ministers and officials of the Palestine Authority confirmed Netanyahu's procrastination, yet preparations for MENA III went ahead. And in the meantime America continued to exert every effort to gloss over any cracks in a peace process that is on the brink of collapse.

It does not seem particularly productive to blame the current impasse on the arrogance of Netanyahu. But nor is it particularly convincing to assume, following recent events, that the Israeli government will now back down and resume the peace process. There is every indication that Netanyahu formulated his policies with the intention of continuing with the peace process up to a certain point and no further.

Netanyahu does not want to sign any further agreements with the Palestinians, nor does he want progress along the Syrian-Lebanese track. Israel's position vis-à-vis the Washington Summit is, therefore, completely consistent. Israel will not budge an inch on the tunnel issue, nor is Netanyahu willing to discuss anything other than halting violence in the Occupied Territories.

Threats concerning the disarming of the Palestinian police and the possibility of re-occupying territories evacuated by the Israeli army are clear indications of Netanyahu's intentions. Certainly the Israeli prime minister was keen to avoid a meeting with Arafat in Cairo, preferring instead a Washington summit. He knows, after all, that the Clinton administration, preoccupied with the election campaign, is interested only in cosmetic surgery, and since his coming to power has lacked any coherent strategy in dealing with the peace problem.

There remain many questions awaiting answers, and the future of continuing the peace process on either the Palestinian or the Syrian-Lebanese tracks looks bleak, a fact that will necessarily require a re-evaluation of Arab positions in the light of the results of the Washington summit.



## Soapbox

### One hundred days of hell

A hundred days have passed since Netanyahu came to power, days in which his own hostility to peace, and that of the right-wing coalition he brought with him, has precipitated a deep rift in Israeli society, damaged relations with neighboring countries, alienated international opinion and undermined the peace process.

In Washington, attending a summit convened to diffuse the current crisis, Netanyahu displayed his customary insensitivity, announcing that the excavations that threaten several Islamic monuments, among them Al-Aqsa Mosque, would continue. He reiterated that Jerusalem was the city of the Jews, offending the sensitivities of Muslims and Christians alike. Such gross insensitivity is shared by officials of his government. Sharon, during a visit to a Jewish settlement in Gaza, hinted at an expansion in the settlement programme while one of the prime minister's advisors, after announcing that the Palestinian police should be disarmed, went on to say that withdrawal from Hebron would not be completed.

President Mubarak's refusal to go to Washington demonstrated his support for the Palestinian people, who now face an Israeli army using live ammunition, who live under curfew, who on the streets of their towns daily see Israeli tanks and who, in villages, are harassed by Apache and Cobra attack helicopters.

Similarly, it was right that Yasser Arafat did go, if only to remind the American administration of its pledges regarding Jerusalem and to clarify the plight of Palestinian people.

Now it is up to Washington to act. And soon it will become obvious whether the American administration is willing to devote more attention to the peace process than to the forthcoming presidential elections.

This week's Soapbox speaker is the permanent Palestinian representative at the Arab League.



Mohamed Sobeh

# Oslo - Netanyahu style

The blood and sacrifices of the past week may well mark a victory for both Arafat and Netanyahu, writes Tikva Honig-Parnas. Meanwhile, Oslo's apartheid is being hammered into place

To many people it seems that the opening of the 'Hasmonaean tunnel' sums up Netanyahu's irresponsible goal: setting fire to the Territories and thus bringing to a halt the progress of the Oslo agreements. It is possible, however, that the opposite is true — that Netanyahu needed this step to deliberately get the Oslo process out of the deep-freezer and then enforce it according to his own tastes. This is the traditional style of the Israeli right which, in contrast to the Labour Party, is coarse, arrogant and more exhibitionist, a lover of nationalist symbols, a believer in military power — and thus not ready for a bit of generosity in granting even symbolic independence to the Palestinians.

Since his rise to power, pressures from the extreme right, both secular (in his own party) and religious (the National Religious Party and the extremist settlers) have been pushing Netanyahu to discontinue the Oslo process. Opposed to them, the Americans and the heads of the Israeli military forces have pressed for the implementation of the agreements. They have warned him of the danger of Arafat's regime losing its legitimacy even with Fatah, and raised the possibility of infitida breaking out at their initiative.

The opening of the tunnel, which was supposedly dug out during the period of the Hasmonaean monarchy (163-60 BC), was supposed to raise widespread and enthusiastic support among many groups in Israel. The Hasmonaean monarchy, thanks to its revolt against the

Hellenistic Seleucids, has been granted a place of honour in the complex of myths created by Zionism during its search for the 'very bedrock of our existence.' In Bibi Netanyahu's words. In this way, he was following in the footsteps of his predecessors, legitimising the project in a way which has always been necessary for every one of Zionism's colonial endeavours. This time, the project is the accelerated drive for the Judaisation of Jerusalem, especially through Netanyahu's close cooperation with the most fanatic fundamentalist organisations, obsessed with buying up property in the Old City and East Jerusalem. One of these groups — besides funding Netanyahu's election campaign — has also funded the excavation project, initiated under the Labour government.

What was not planned by Netanyahu was the force of the Palestinian response. It far exceeded his expectations of 'disturbances which will last a day or two only'. Once again, the mistaken assumption which provided one of the pillars of Oslo was inflated by the Israeli establishment (Labour as well as Likud). It was assumed that the political process would destroy Palestinian resistance, both military action and mass uprising, by means of a mercenary Palestinian army completely alienated from its own people. These mistaken assumptions, deeply rooted in the Israeli perspective of the Oslo agreements, were reflected in the public discourse following the bloody events: first, the events are

generally perceived as having taken place at Arafat's command; secondly, at the centre of this discourse, one can find astonishment — and anger — that Palestinian police would actually defend their own people, instead of siding with the Israeli army.

Netanyahu's assumption, that Israel could impose on the ground whatever de facto situation it chose without encountering any serious resistance, was also supported by the belief within the Israeli establishment that it could count on the Palestinian preventive security forces which, during the past months, had successfully cooperated with Israeli intelligence against Islamic and left-wing opposition organisations. But there is no doubt that the natural racism common to the position of any coloniser blinded the Israelis from seeing the strength of the dedication and determination which the Palestinians have revealed, expressing the terrible rage which has built up towards the Israeli occupation and also towards the Palestinian Authority because of deep disappointment with Oslo. The tunnel was just a trigger.

At the time of writing (immediately after Clinton's announcement of the summit meeting in Washington), it appears that the sacrifices made and the blood spilled after the opening of the tunnel may indeed pave the road back to Oslo for Netanyahu. This is a victory for both Netanyahu and Arafat. Netanyahu, who earned a certain increased trust from the extreme religious right

and the fundamentalists who pressed for the opening of the tunnel, can now claim that he has no choice but to continue to implement the Oslo accords. On the other hand, the 'proofs' that have supposedly accumulated following this new Palestinian uprising will enable him to attempt to enact the agreements at his own rate and according to his own 'style'.

Above all, he has been given a pretext for demanding amendments to the agreements — 'adjustments' in the redeployment plan in Hebron, or the strengthening of Israel's direct military rule, currently being implemented through the tanks stationed around the West Bank's main cities.

Arafat, for his part, has won a respite from the biting criticism against him and a renewal of temporary support from broad sections of the Palestinian people. But this support is clearly conditional. Arafat will need to prove that the Oslo agreements guarantee national Palestinian interests — something which he will not be able to do. The chapters of heroism of the last week will surely be recorded in the collective memory of the Palestinians, and will strengthen their stand against Oslo's plan of an apartheid state, which is being erected before their very eyes.

The writer is editor of *News From Within*, a monthly journal published by the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem.

# The flesh and blood of peace

Policymakers and media moguls have their own perceptions of peace, writes Gamil Mattar. Ordinary people, on the other hand, are more concerned with different matters — dignity, security and justice, for example

I disagree with many people who oppose Israel because of a specific action. Preferably, the 'curve' of Arab anger should coincide exactly with the curve of Israeli aggression. Therefore, I do not think that it is in the Palestinians' best interest, nor in the Arabs' interest generally, to attempt to repress Arab rage in return for temporarily shutting down the Aqsa Mosque tunnel.

This temporary measure will not alter anything in the situation of Jerusalem. Events of great importance are in the offing for that city. The US has declared its decision to transfer the embassy there by 1999. Israel is working day and night to turn Eastern Jerusalem into a Jewish area before the end of this year. Two years later, the final status of Jerusalem will supposedly be hammered out between the Arabs and Israel. In 2000, the Christian world will celebrate the second millennium of the Messiah's birth. By then, Arab Jerusalem will have been reduced to a few alleys — an accurate modern approximation of the ghettos to which the Jews were once confined in most European cities.

This issue is characterised by an upswing in Israeli foreign policy aggressiveness. Therefore, contrary to the advice dispensed by last week's advocates of restraint, mutual escalation should not be stopped. The tunnel is nothing but a point on an ascending curve, along which tension has been steadily rising since Israel occupied Arab territories in 1967. Nor should the incident be disregarded, as the Palestinian Authority disregarded the closing of Palestinian offices in Jerusalem. It is almost certain that Netanyahu would never have ordered the tunnel's opening had the PNA voiced its opposition more assertively, when the Israelis shut down their offices.

Political stability and security in Palestine and in other Arab states are jeopardised by this haphazard, whimsical policy of opposition to scattered incidents. Individual opposition, immediately suppressed, leaves tensions running high, anger and discontent simmering just below the surface. The situation is even graver when it concerns a particularly critical issue like Jerusalem, which affects numbers far greater than even the Palestinians and the rest of the Arabs combined. We are aware, as are all Western countries, that in many Islamic regions in Asia, organised fury is building up.

The US's methods in dealing with Arabs and Muslims have aroused general wrath. The lot of the *umma* — the Muslim community — at the end of the 20th century continues to inspire anger and frustration. Arabs have repeatedly attempted to regain their leading position among the Muslims during this century. Developments in the Palestinian arena have played a fundamental role in intensifying those feelings. In other words, an Asian curve of anger and opposition is rising to meet the curve of Israeli aggression. This matter is so grave that no exaggeration is necessary to make its implications clear. On the other hand, a considerable change is taking place in Israel itself, where religious extremism is flourishing. The Zionist right is thriving on this phenomenon.

Apparently, our memory — especially the memory of many Arab governments — fails us. Then again, perhaps the propaganda accompanying the latest version of peace to be imposed on the Arabs, has lulled us into forgetting the fundamentals and pillars of Zionism. The driving force of Zionism is the project of a Jewish state which

would guarantee happiness and peace to all Jews. Every variant of nationalist and religious fanaticism has its special logic, and Zionism is no exception. Happiness and peace for the Jews will only be built on foundations of Arab and Palestinian misery, fragmentation and oppression. The advocates and founders of Zionism made no effort to conceal this logic, which was openly declared and which remains dominant.

A Zionist identity means that American Jews can rest assured that Jews in Israel are safe. Thanks to Israel's power and strength, an American or Russian Jew enjoys greater influence in America or Russia, and obtains greater advantages than those enjoyed by other minorities, or even by the majority itself. Therefore, since Israel was created it has been necessary to assert Israel's power and supremacy over all her neighbours consistently. This supremacy has usually been asserted through wars, expulsion, division, invasion, occupation, modification of the Palestinian situation on the ground, and humiliation of Arabs. These policies were not restricted to right-wing parties, but were practiced by left and right-wing governments.

Jewish philosopher Herman Cohen wonders: are the Jews really happier? Are they now secure and stable? He answers his own question: Israel's hostile policy and Zionist philosophy have made Jews everywhere less happy and secure; they are more distressed and vulnerable than at any other time in their history. Most Jews have become schizophrenic due to their dual commitment and loyalty — torn between their political allegiance and their loyalty to human compassion and rational values.

Some Jews in America, because of Zionism, forgo rationality and liberalism, preferring instead to believe in a 'virtual state' which would comprise the entity called Israel, yet surpass it in ferocity and the antagonism of its policies. Compared with Jews living in 19th century Poland, in France or Argentina, or in the Arab world before the wave of migration to Israel and other countries, these Jews are definitely less happy and secure. Neither the Zionist movement nor the Jewish state could offer them well-being or security. Any Jew inside Israel, the bastion of Zionism, is less secure than his counterpart in New York, Los Angeles, or Buenos Aires. Was this not the reason for Netanyahu's victory? The signs of dissonance among Jews in Israel, the debilitation and strident extremism, indicate that this dissent will soon spread to Jewish communities abroad. Changes in Israeli society reveal that Israel and Jewish organisations abroad are now encouraging each other's stress and insecurity. Violence and extremism run through relations between Israel and Jewish communities abroad, as if each were feeding the restlessness and misery of the other.

Netanyahu's statements to the Jewish community in France, the clamour which his Paris visit created among that community's various tendencies, and the hostility and acrimony which his presence triggered all seem to confirm the conclusion that the aggressiveness of Israeli leaders, from Begin to Rabin, Dayan to Peres, or Sharon to Netanyahu, is a mirror image of Zionism's failure to achieve its major objectives: happiness and security for Jews. There are no great differences between Rabin, who broke children's bones, and Netanyahu, who or-

dered his soldiers to aim at demonstrators instead of shooting into the air in warning. When Israeli rulers exhibited any flexibility or moderation, their hands still stained with the blood of their victims, Arab or otherwise, they only reinforced the feeling that Zionism had failed completely, the virtual state had collapsed, and that the mythical land imagined by the first Zionists, a land of milk and honey, absolute security and abundance for all Jews, did not exist after all.

No appeasement is possible. A few weeks of relative calm — made possible by the Washington conference — will do nothing to prevent Netanyahu from continuing his transgressions against Jerusalem, the Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Attempts to calm down the situation, even temporarily, are motivated by the latest Palestinian uprising, which made it clear that Netanyahu's actions will have dire consequences, and which convinced many of the importance of keeping the peace process rolling on, even formally.

There are many who fear the dangers to themselves if this explosion spirals out of control. It will harm several Arab regimes if it causes greater popular anger against the United States. This outburst, however — even if it grows in scope — remains the only meaningful reaction to Netanyahu's hostility and arrogance. It is also the ideal way to reform the peace process, and awaken those dreaming that peace in the Middle East had finally been achieved.

The latest developments in Palestine, whether those initiated by Netanyahu and his government, or those brought about by the actions of Palestinians in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Gaza, echoing on the streets of Arab capitals, revealed a glaring truth: peace as discussed in negotiations, conferences, international forums, press conferences, and articles is different from peace as understood by the mass of people in Palestine or elsewhere. The gap between the two concepts grows ever wider.

A sector of the Arab elite perceives peace in a specific way. Their concept will never mean a fair peace, and will not guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people; nor will it guarantee security for the rest of Arab countries. There are reasons for this perception (presented as the only possible peaceful settlement). But ordinary people, who are neither policy-makers nor negotiators, have different priorities, and may well believe in such concepts as dignity and nationalism. They are extremely loyal to symbols such as Jerusalem, land, holy struggle, sacred space, and feelings such as equality, security and serenity. These preoccupations and emotions are the flesh and blood of peace for ordinary people, and have nothing to do with peace as seen by the negotiators and those cooed with mass media mobilisation.

A gap has been created in the peace process in the region; the explosion occurred when the time was ripe. It will not be the last, so long as the gap persists between those who pretend that their version of peace is the only possible one, and those who believe that peace should be just and complete — and that it should respect Arab dignity.

The writer is the director of the Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research.

# The bubble bursts

The violence of the reactions provoked by his government's actions should bring Netanyahu back down to earth, writes Salah Montasser

Benjamin Netanyahu's first reaction after the outbreak of Palestinian anger precipitated by the opening of the tunnel beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque was to call President Hosni Mubarak and ask him to use his influence to diffuse the crisis. President Mubarak advised him to contact Arafat directly, since Arafat was the person most immediately concerned. Yet another 24 hours had passed before Netanyahu finally picked up the phone and called Arafat.

Netanyahu's call to Mubarak followed an outpouring of invective in which Israel had accused Egypt of 'overstepping the mark' with a series of military manoeuvres code-named 'Badr 96', a name that touched a sensitive nerve, given that the October War shared the same code name — 'Badr'. As a result, Netanyahu accused Egypt of violating the peace treaty and engaging in provocative military activities.

Netanyahu, arrogant as ever, thought he had Egypt in a corner. However, Hosni Mubarak, with well-reasoned aplomb, told him that this was not the first time Egypt had conducted military manoeuvres since the peace accord, and that when Egypt conducted such manoeuvres in 1993 they were also code-named 'Badr', a name that provoked the consternation of neither Peres nor Rabin.

Despite Netanyahu's attempts to make it appear that Cairo had precipitated the crisis in bilateral relations, it should by now be clear to even the most shortsighted commentators that his government has consistently attempted to burn bridges between Israel and other parties to the peace process — first Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians and now Egypt.

Netanyahu has consistently attempted to distort reality. He spends his time in a state of permanent delusion, believing that he can impose his will on all and sundry and that they, in response, will simply smile and accept the fact.

The recent uprising, however, has burst the bubble of such illusions. That Egypt, after his virulent invectives, was the first country he called in order to diffuse the crisis and that, after long boycotting Arafat, he met with him for several hours, illustrates that he may well be coming down from the clouds. Regardless of the outcome of the Washington Summit, it has now been made clear to Netanyahu that he cannot exercise control of the region on the basis of his day-dreams.

Netanyahu thought that by flexing his muscles he could ensure peace and security for Israel. The haze of anger he precipitated has confirmed the ridiculousness of such an assumption.

Israeli security can be guaranteed only by coming to an understanding with its neighbors, and with the Palestinians.







# A futurist fox-trot

"What we want to do is break down the mysterious doors of the impossible." Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wanted to revolutionise Italy's cultural life, to burn the museums and academies, to celebrate everything that was new. His funeral in 1944 was almost the last public ceremony of Italy's collapsing fascist republic. Nigel Ryan examines the ambitions of Marinetti and his Futurist band, the focus of a major exhibition at the Centre of Arts

On 20 February 1909 *Le Figaro* appeared on the newsstands as usual, though on its front page, in the first three columns, was a strange item. It was signed F T Marinetti, and the bulk of the piece, which took up almost a third of the front page of what was then Europe's leading newspaper, was a manifesto of Futurism.

"We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness...to exalt aggressive action...the punch and the slap...We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke plumed serpents; factories hung from clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with the glitter of knives; deep chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled with tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers sound like the flapping of flags and the applause of an enthusiastic crowd."

With these words — and with a great many others besides — Filippo Tommaso Marinetti launched himself before a much wider public than was familiar with the essentially symbolist literary magazine, *Poesia*, of which he was editor. He was aiming at a mass audience, and though at the time of the publication of its founding manifesto Futurism was a one man show, a movement with a leader but no adherents, Marinetti, whose genius erred always on the side of publicity, was not deterred. The front page of *Le Figaro* was merely the opening shot in a campaign that would see Marinetti, born in Alexandria to Italian, professional, upper middle class parents, become one of the leading protagonists of the European avant garde, writer and/or publisher of innumerable manifestos that covered all the arts, from literature, theatre, sculpture, painting and music to cinema, photography, architecture, radiophonic theatre and even fashion and cookery. His was to become, in the period immediately before the First World War, practically a household name: in London, Moscow, Paris or New York mention of Marinetti would suggest all that was most daring, innovative and international about that seemingly most shocking of activities, modern art. Many of the artists associated with Marinetti, certainly in the earliest days of Futurism, have made it into the museums for whose destruction they repeatedly and rationally called, and perfectly credible arguments can be made for the influence of the Futurists on groups and individuals as diverse as Artaud, Apollinaire, Marcel Duchamp, Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticists, El Lissitzky, John Cage, Samuel Beckett, Le Corbusier, Dighilev, Gabo and the Constructivists, Ezra and the Dadaists.

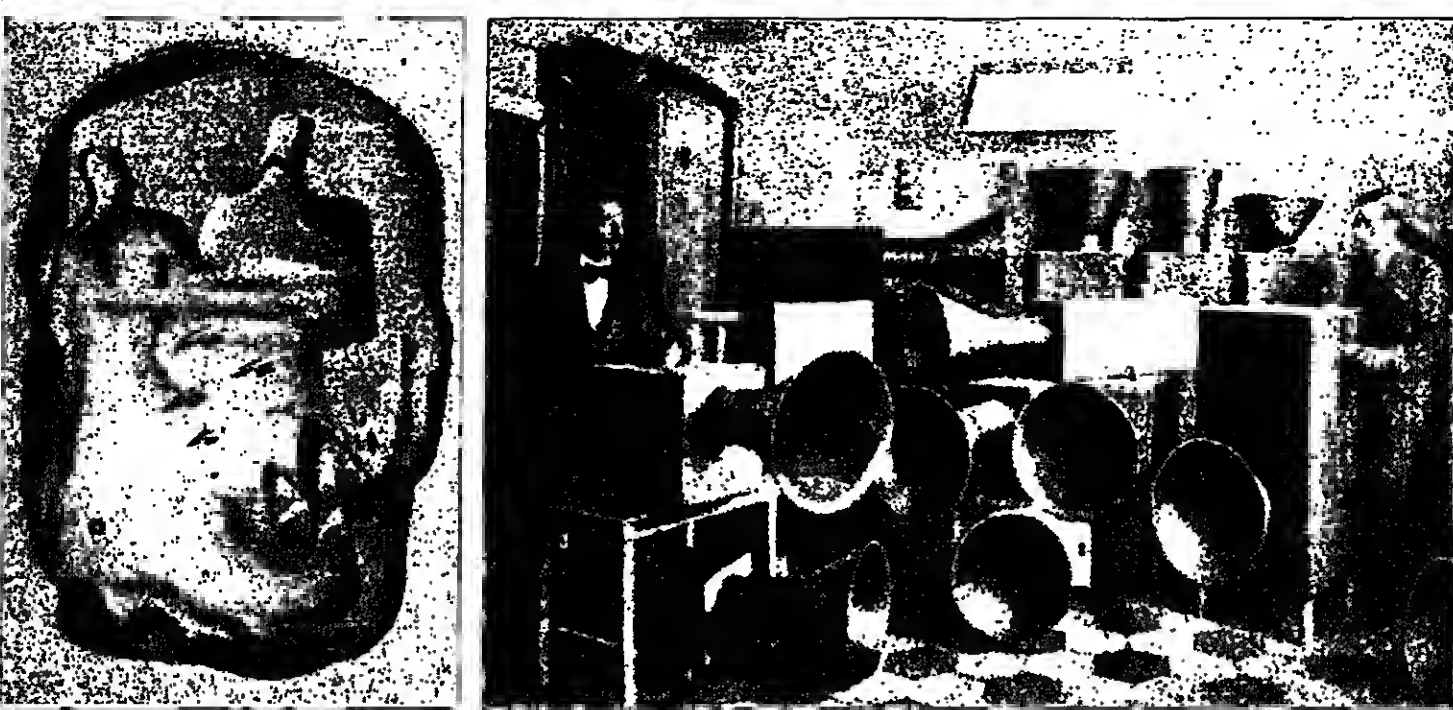
Yet by the time Marinetti died, on 2 December, 1944, his name had become anathema to any self-respecting radical. He had retreated, with the remnants of Italy's Fascist establishment, to the squalid Republic of Salò, the puppet state established by the Germans before the final collapse of Mussolini's regime. His last extant text, *Quarter of an hour of poetry of the X Mas*, exalted the most vicious Black Brigades, and his funeral at Ballaggio was one of the last ceremonies of the collapsing republic.

Not that it was always so. In 1909 Marinetti had given his movement — whose avowed aim was nothing less than the complete renewal of cultural life — just ten years before "others, younger and more valiant, throw us into the basket like useless manuscripts...scouring at the academy doors the pleasant odour of our rotting minds, marked out already for the catacombs of the libraries." But more than a decade after Marinetti's by then premature prophecy Antonio Gramsci, co-founder and theorist of the Italian Communist Party, was still able to pay Marinetti a tribute that verged on the fulsome in an article in *Ordine Nuovo* (5 January, 1921):

"The Futurists...had a precise and clear conception that our era, the era of big industry, of the great workers' cities, of intense and tumultuous life, had to have new forms of art, philosophy, customs, language: this was their clearly revolutionary concept, and an absolutely Marxist one, when the socialists were not even remotely concerned with such things, when the socialists certainly had nothing like so precise a concept of politics or economics, when the socialists would have been frightened (and still are) at the thought that the bourgeois machine of power had to be smashed in the state and the factories."

The Futurists in their field, in the field of culture, are revolutionaries; in this field, in terms of creativity, it is unlikely that the working class will be able to do more than the Futurists for a long time..."

By the time a second decade had passed and Marinetti, once the most vociferous critic of the academies though now a member — albeit a little unwillingly — of Mussolini's Accademia d'Italia had yet to be consigned to the wastepaper bin, Walter Benjamin produced his damning judgment on the activities of the Italian Futurists, published in the epilogue to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.



From top, clockwise: Marinetti in front of a painting of himself, *La Famiglia Marinetti* — Gerardo Dottori's 1930 portrait — is included in the current exhibition; Luigi Russolo, left, one of Futurism's founding members, with the noise intoners that were intended to revolutionise music, and *Futurismo e Fascismo*, 1935, by Mino Delle Site, making plain the connections that many art historians have cooed to ignore

"Flat art — *pereat mundus*," says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense of perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of *Vort* pour l'art, *Mankind*, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicising art."

Three significant dates: 1909, which saw the first Futurist manifesto; 1921, the year of Gramsci's article, written three years after the founding of the Italian Fascist Party by Mussolini and two years after Marinetti had become a member of the Central Committee of the Fasci di Combattimento; and the early 1930s when the political and ideological confusion that had seen, in Italy at least, a series of unlikely alliances between nationalists, Futurists, anarchists, syndicalists, republicans, Mazzinians, democrats and Freemasons, had finally resolved itself into the more obvious black and white of thirties politics.

It is, of course, the black and white of Benjamin that has tended to colour our views of Marinetti — a publicist of genius who went off the rails is the usual view — while the majority of art historians writing on Futurism have tended to pass conveniently over the movement's political programme to treat it in purely formal terms, as a kind of second rate cubism, provincial, interesting in parts, but ultimately a failure. Fascists tend to be overlooked in a kind of embarrassed silence.

Unfortunately the current exhibition at the Centre of Arts, Zamelek, which contains a majority of works from the later period, the period of Marinetti's second futurism — after 1931 the word Futurism was itself largely dropped in favour of the terms *aeropittura* and *aerocultura* — serves largely to confirm the most common view, that Futurism, after an interesting beginning, lingered too long then petered out into something that in addition to being passeist — the Futurists own term of ultimate abuse — was also downright silly. The most talented artists surrounding Marinetti were either dead — Boccioni and the architect Antonio Sant'Elia were both killed in the First World War — or else had moved beyond the orbit of Marinetti — Balla, Carrà and Severini were all anxious, by the early twenties, to loosen their ties with Futurism. Many of the signatures to the first *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* resented what they saw as Marinetti's willingness to co-opt the second rate in broadening the basis of the movement. And it is the lesser, later artists, many of whom were not born

when the initial manifesto appeared on the front page of *Le Figaro*, who make up the majority of those exhibited in the current show.

There are aeroplanes, aeroplanes everywhere, certainly all over the walls of the Akhenaten galleries. There is Tullio Crali's heroic airman, square jawed super hero next to his plane. Crali's aeroplanes soaring above the clouds, Tato's planes, dropping bombs on a burning city, Ambrosi's aeroplanes about to dive bomb another, Sante Monachesi's nocturnal aerial battle and mercurious recreations of aerial views of landscape. It is all boy's own story stuff, fighter pilot as hero and over mind the natives on whom the bombs are dropped. The natives in question — many of these paintings coincide with Mussolini's Ethiopian campaign — were generally north African, and in several paintings from the early forties quite specifically Egyptian. What few bombs landed on Alexandria in the Second World War were dropped by Italian planes, and several paintings in the current show celebrate — as facile as that may now sound — the bombing of Egypt's second city.

Not that there was anything particularly new about the Futurists' fascination with aeroplanes. Marinetti was himself keen to point out, in *The Futurist Manifesto of Aeropainting* (22 Sept, 1922), its precedents:

"Aeropainting started at the beginning of the Futurist movement with the first Futurists anxious to leave the earth with poetry, painting and sculpture and achieve a first, albeit vague aesthetic of flight and of aerial life." (Incidentally, in 1918, after making his first flight, Mussolini was himself to describe the experience in terms that typified Futurist bombast: "I feel in my veins the truly diocysian intoxication at the conquest of the azure.")

Nor was there anything new about the North African setting, since as early as the publication of the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* Marinetti had juxtaposed the two — ignorant natives and modern technology, exemplified by the aeroplane — when he described "superficial minds" as being "incapable of grasping any oval facts as the Arabs who looked with indifference at the first aeroplanes in the sky over Tripoli", referring, of course, to Italy's earlier colonial adventure in North Africa, of which Marinetti was, naturally, an ardent supporter. Which makes it all the more surprising that in promoting the current exhibition the organisers should have attempted to play up Marinetti's Egyptian connections, connections that Marinetti himself would either fumble — he regularly claimed that his family's considerable fortune was made in the brothels of Alexandria, when in fact his father was a successful lawyer — or elaborate on in order to exoticise himself. (Throughout his life Mar-

the subsequent history of the movement simply illustrates the confusion of both their aims and practice, a confusion that made it all the more easy for their free-ranging cultural anarchism to be subsumed within the narrower precincts of early Fascist politics.

The present showing at the Centre of Arts which, apart from copies of manifestos and the cover of Marinetti's own remarkable text *Zang Tumb Tuum*, consists only of later works, culled largely from the thirties, of the second rate artists Marinetti had encouraged to jump on the bandwagon, ignores the complexity and possibilities of early practice, playing the same old patriotic tune that was eventually to beguile, and had always attracted, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. And while it is on bad thing to be reminded of the part such visual sloganeering plays in supporting the insupportable, it is less edifying having to wade through so much dreadful painting. The big guns of the movement, Severini, Balla, Russolo, Boccioni and Carrà are all, more or less, absent. They, along with the architect Sant'Elia, whose accomplished sketches delineated the skyline of the Futurist city but who, as a practicing professional, received only commissions for tombs and cemeteries, most notably the military ceremony of Monfalcone near Trieste, are represented in the upper galleries by a series of large laminated boards containing photographic reproductions of paintings and drawings, together with a few explanatory notes.

While it would be unrealistic to expect works by such artists to form part of a touring exhibition such as this show — they are far too valuable these days to be allowed out of the public collections where they are housed — it would surely have been possible to think of some more interesting way of presenting them other than these laminated classroom displays.

Still, there are some intriguing items on the boards, including Russolo's musical manuscripts — with his new invention, the noise intoners, he hoped to revolutionise music — and the score, amply illustrated with dancing couples astride the notes, of a futurist fox-trot. There is, too, a sepia tinted photograph of the young Marinetti, at home in Alexandria, beneath brass mosque lamps, amid inlaid furniture, elaborate arabesques and oriental carpets. The founding manifesto of Futurism, the item that occupied the front page of *Le Figaro* in 1909, was prefaced with a short preamble:

"We stayed up all night, my friends and I, under the hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass... A memory of Egypt? Not quite, for this was Marinetti's own apartment on the Casa Rossa, exotic, decadent, the perfect setting for a young symbolist. It was everything that the Futurists detested, and strangely enough, it was all Marinetti's own."

## Plain Talk

One issue that continues to arouse controversy is the adaptation of classic novels for the cinema or the theatre. Whenever such a film is completed or a play is produced the question of adherence to the original text is invariably raised. The reason why this question is currently pre-occupying critics and film producers in England is the recent production of Hardy's novel *Jude The Obscure* and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*. Enthusiastic supporters of the two writers have expressed dissatisfaction with the productions, for what they called "imposing 20th century conventions on the works of classic fiction".

Recently the screen adaptation of classic novels has increased. *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Conan* and *The Secret Agent* have all been filmed. The BBC has announced its future productions, which will include George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, among others. The return to the classics seems to reflect some kind of dissatisfaction with current writings.

The question that imposes itself is how faithful to the original text should an adaptation of a classic really be? There is no doubt that there are as many interpretations of a work of art, be it a novel, a play or a painting, as there are readers or viewers. What characterises the classics, in my opinion, is the universality of their emotional appeal. Such a universality, of which Shakespeare is a clear example, entails that these works were made for all seasons and all environments.

Louis Marks, the producer of the television version of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, denies that there is such a thing as a broad definition of authenticity. "The eyes of the author who observed that society", he writes, "are dead and gone. For all your research and looking through the old pictures you can never see there again and see as they saw for their own reasons. Who knows whether Jane Austen presented an authentic picture of her times? She might have distorted it because it worked better in her plot."

Commenting on the issue, Peter Stanford of the *Sunday Times*: "Culture" writes that true authenticity is in telling a living story, with living characters, that still have something to say. By such criteria, continues Stanford, "Jane Austen triumphs not, as her literary guardians maintain, because she is totally removed from a troubled modern world, but rather because her novels are written by a genius with an acute insight into the human psyche."

The question of what has come to be called literary film has also preoccupied Egyptian critics since the appearance of Dr Taha Hussein's *The Call of the Nightingale*. Quite a number of novels by writers such as Youssef El-Sabai, Tewfik El-Hakim and, of course, Naguib Mahfouz, have been produced. Every time such a film appeared there was always a clamour about how far it had departed from the original text.

One condition that has generally been agreed upon is that there should be no departure from the original plot. But Naguib Mahfouz, who has had a great deal of experience in such matters, believes that the moment a novel is taken up by a film producer it belongs to him and not to the author, and he is free to interpret it in his own way. It is worth mentioning that Mahfouz himself has written a number of scenarios for films and consequently is well qualified to comment on the problems that are involved in adapting works of literature for the screen from both the writers and the producers viewpoints.

Mursi Saad El-Din

## Books

# Recalling the epic

Qissat Al-Hallaj Wa Ma Gara Lahu Min Ahl Baghdad (The Story of Al-Hallaj and What Befell Him at the Hands of the People of Baghdad), ed. Said Abdel-Fattah. Cairo: Cultural Palaces Organisation, Treasures Series, 1996

Al-Hussein Bin Mansour Al-Hallaj, one of the greatest saints, was born in AH 244 and executed in AH 309, paying with his life for his principles and concepts. This remarkable man inspired the late poet Salah Abdel-Sabour to write the play *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj* (The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj) — not surprising. For centuries before Salah Abdel-Sabour the great mystic had inspired legends of unknown popular poets — hence the book in hand.

In Talaat Library, annexed to the National Library in Cairo, researcher Said Abdel-Fattah came upon a manuscript — the only surviving one — of *Qissat Al-Hallaj Wa Ma Gara Lahu Min Ahl Baghdad* ("The Story of Al-Hallaj and What Befell Him at the Hands of the People of Baghdad"). Written in a mixture of *fusha* (classical Arabic) and *ammiya* (colloquial), the bulk of the manuscript includes poems in the vernacular. Each scene opens with the words: "Thus the narrator spoke, O sirs...", indicating that the text was used for recitals in *zika* sessions and at cafes. The text, transcribed in AH 1199, 890 years

after the execution of the mystic, demonstrates that Al-Hallaj lived on in collective memory for centuries. Which begs the question: What is it about the figure of Al-Hallaj that spread his tale from Iraq, where he was executed, to Egypt where it was cherished for so many centuries that it was eventually committed to paper?

The answer to this question involves the outstanding nature of Al-Hallaj as a mystic, the originality of his sayings and the courage with which he proclaimed them wherever he went, drawing hordes of followers. Such indeed was the sway Al-Hallaj held on the masses that the Caliph, fearing for his own authority, ordered the shahids to issue *fatwas* sanctioning his murder. Not only was Al-Hallaj executed, but his books, ranging from philosophy, *sharia* and *sufism*, were burned — save for two, a collection of his poems and *Al-Tawassut*.

The loss of the 45 books is one of the greater crimes against thought and philosophy in Islam. Subsequent generations were deprived of their history and heritage. Furthermore, we were deprived

of deeper insights into the battle between the Caliph and the mystic. What remains are only slivers that whet the appetite.

As to "The Story of Al-Hallaj and What Befell Him at the Hands of the People of Baghdad", judging by the ood published manuscript, it was a thoroughly Egyptianised version of the epic — as with *Abu Zaid Al-Hilali* and *Sirat Al-Amira Zai Al-Himma*. Such epics were appropriated and refashioned by folk bards the better to express the populace's sense of oppression and its yearning for justice and freedom.

But there is no doubt that in the collective memory, Al-Hallaj elicited deep sympathy and that the charge of apostasy brought against him was totally disregarded by the people. The story of Al-Hallaj begins, in time-honoured tradition, with a vision-like dream of his mother's. In the dream she is told that if she gave birth to a son, she should offer him to the men of religion so that he would devote his life to God. When her son reached the age of eight, she took him to Al-Sheikh Al-Geneid and begged

that he should accept him as a disciple so that she might fulfil the dream. However, if we examine the contemporary sources on Al-Hallaj, we find that he was never a disciple as such of the Sheikh, merely a companion who sought his advice. But then, collective memory weaves of any given event the yarn that appeals to its psyche rather than that which corresponds to historical fact.

The actual narrative follows Al-Hallaj's career from a servant to Al-Sheikh Al-Geneid to his disciple. It cites Al-Hallaj's miracles and Al-Sheikh Al-Geneid's advice that he should keep them a secret as most people would consider him an infidel and heretic. We hear of Al-Hallaj's public discourses in the alleys of Baghdad where he preached. But Al-Hallaj's miraculous acts strike awe and eventually fear in his beholders.

Such supernatural acts, it is to be recalled, are a leitmotif of folk epics. Thus, when Al-Hallaj was arrested he said to his fellow prisoners that it was their sins and obduracy of their God that landed them in this position. After leading them in prayer,

he then drew a boat, sat in its centre and asked the others to join him: "O poverty-stricken ones, row your boat by invoking God." The boat then sailed through what appeared to be a sea and Al-Hallaj let them out at the shore.

The same magical realist approach is seen at work in the last scenes of Al-Hallaj's life. When his crucifixion was finally decreed, Al-Hallaj demanded a copper pestle of great weight. Throwing it into the fire, he waited by the pestle until it had been reduced to an ember. He then set on it and invited all and sundry to join him. Seeing people flee from him, Al-Hallaj scornfully commented that they ran from the fires of the earth but cared little for those of the here after. Standing in the midst of the flames, Al-Hallaj continued to preach and exhort people. When passion for the Divine welled in him, he thrust his fingers into the fire saying "God is great." The fire went out and the pestle exploded into 60 fragments.

Reviewed by Mahmoud El-Wardani



# Defiance on her brow

Margot Badran remembers suffrage activist Durriya Shafiq forty years after women obtained the right to vote

When I first met Durriya Shafiq, she was under house arrest. I had wanted to see her but feared that house arrest would probably make this impossible. But then, I did not really know what house arrest was. It seemed to me that it just meant someone was not permitted to go out. This echoed what Ceza Nabrawi had recently told me about the old harem days when women were not allowed to leave the enclosures of their homes, or to do so only under close surveillance. Now the state was imposing domestic incarceration, to use the term of nineteenth century poet Al-Sha Al-Tamuriya.

How would I manage to meet the woman I had been hearing so much about? As Durriya Shafiq had been a journalist — the founder of *Bint Al-Nil* (Daughter of the Nile) magazine in 1945 — I went to veteran journalist Mohamed Ali Nasif for help. He found Durriya Shafiq's telephone number for me and paved the way with a call of his own. Mohamed Ali Nasif often helped me make contact with people in those years, with virtually no telephone books and heavy state security.

It was a January afternoon. I jumped into a taxi in Dokki, heading across the "little Nile" to Zamalek past the Gabalaya Gardens (built a century earlier for the visit of Empress Eugenie when she came to Egypt for the inauguration of the Suez Canal), down streets lined with large old trees shading solid apartment blocks built early in the century. I descended from the taxi on Salaheddin Street. Facing me were two large, identical buildings looking into a common courtyard. I stood contemplating which building to enter for what seemed a long time, when a *hawwab* appeared in front of me. The doorman knew everything and everyone. We all relied upon them: inhabitants of buildings, visitors and, during those days of heavy surveillance, the state itself. So, with the aid of the doorman, I entered the right building and the right elevator. I was whisked up to the sixth floor. A servant opened the door and ushered me into an elegant sitting room. It did not seem like a "prison" to me. But, I thought, to be confined to a house seemed distinctly unpleasant. Could one make visits, run errands? How literal was this "arrest"?

As I was musing, suddenly and quietly a very thin woman appeared. I arose to take the hand extended to me. The hand was small, like the woman herself. She was wearing a white pullover and black slacks. In those days this was daring attire, certainly different from the suits and dresses worn by other women I had met, and would meet in the coming months. Her sleek, lacquered black hair was pulled tightly back. Her lips were very red. But what was most striking were her high-arched pencilled eyebrows, which gave her a look of boldness and wonder at the same time. They brought one to attention. "The eyebrows" had been her signature, probably since the time of her return from her studies at the Sorbonne in 1940 with a fresh doctorate d'etat in hand. She had burst upon the scene, shocking the upper-class ladies of the Egyptian Feminist Union (the middle-class members were busy pioneering in new careers) who were wary of her daring demeanor and surely jealous of her new credentials. Upper-class ladies prided themselves on their French manners and language, which their local French convent school educations honed, but they were not ready for a woman educated at university in France. Durriya would tell me how upon her return to Egypt the EFU women gave her a chilly reception. They all slumped her, except Huda Sha'rabi. Durriya Shafiq's eyebrows seemed to be a retort. They were defiance written across her forehead, to women, hiding behind their timidity or their class, to men, who insisted on deference and obedience,



Durriya Shafiq

and also the state itself.

Durriya motioned to me to sit down. I sat on a sofa facing into the long room and she on a straight-backed chair directly facing me. We plunged into conversation. Durriya recounted her relationship with Huda Sha'rabi in a tone that underlined the affection she proclaimed. She told how she had lost her mother when she was an eleven-year-old schoolgirl. Durriya had begun her education at an Italian nuns' school in Mansura, but before long had been sent to a school run by French sisters in Tanta, where her maternal grandmother lived. She completed her secondary school education at St Vincent de Paul in Alexandria at sixteen, placing second in the state examination. Her heart had been set on going to university in France but there was no money. Her father, an engineer, was a widower with five other children to support. So, Durriya told me, she wrote to Huda Sha'rabi for help. The EFU president had recently feted the first woman to graduate from Fu'ad I University, later Cairo University. Sha'rabi provided financial help as well as assistance through the bureaucratic maze, enabling Durriya to set off for the Sorbonne in 1928. Durriya Shafiq used to call on Huda Sha'rabi when the latter made her annual trips to France, keeping her feminist passion abreast of her progress. Sha'rabi encouraged Durriya to write articles for *L'Egyptienne*. Durriya wrote a piece titled "Can a Woman be a Philosopher?" (December 1930) and another called "Dreams of a Woman

of Today" (August 1932).

Durriya Shafiq spoke of the last time she had seen Huda Sha'rabi before her death. The final meeting was firmly etched in her memory. Huda Sha'rabi was coming out of Lappas on Qasr Al-Nil Street as Durriya entered the tea shop. Huda asked her why she didn't visit her. Durriya said that Huda told her: "You must take the load from my shoulders." A month later Huda Sha'rabi was gone. Reflecting on the feminist pioneer's death, Durriya said that every life had its own mission.

Durriya's mission, as she saw it, was to help gain political rights for women. It was after the death of Huda Sha'rabi that Durriya founded the Daughter of the Nile Union. Earlier she had begun a journal of the same name. On the cover of *Bint Al-Nil* magazine the first year was a drawing of a woman with red lipstick and a fashionable hair style; the Nile and falcon were in the background. Durriya Shafiq also founded the political *Bint Al-Nil* magazine, for women and men alike, and *Katkat* ("Little Chick") for children. While paying tribute to feminist pioneer Huda Sha'rabi, Durriya insisted that she was not Sha'rabi's successor. Six years later Durriya would tell me precisely the opposite, contending that she saw herself "as continuing Huda Sha'rabi's work".

Durriya recounted the women's march on Parliament and the sit-in she led in 1951. She told me that about a thousand women had come to the American University in Cairo for

a four o'clock meeting in Ewart Hall. They were then informed that the real purpose for coming together was to march on the parliament. Proceeding in their cars, they entered the parliament grounds waving banners and chanting slogans. They staged a three hour sit-in. Parliamentary leaders came out to talk with Durriya Shafiq. They promised that women would be granted their political rights. The women's demand was forwarded to the king the following day. He said that he would not give the women anything. Durriya recalled. She remarked that she had earlier been placed on a royal blacklist, prohibiting her access to the palace. Durriya Shafiq spent much of her life being either locked in or locked out.

In 1956, the government under Nasser granted women their full political rights. This came thirty-two years after women had made their first demands for the vote under the joint leadership of the Egyptian Feminist Union and the Wafdist Women's Central Committee. The following year that same government stopped Durriya Shafiq's movement (as it stopped all other independent movements) and put her under house arrest. But Durriya went a step further than other Egyptians — men and women alike — when she began a hunger strike protesting the lack of democracy in Egypt and denouncing the Nasserist dictatorship. Durriya, Egypt's quintessential suffragist militant, who had wanted above all to secure the vote for women, had succeeded in her mission. When we met in 1968, there were eight women sitting in parliament. Durriya Shafiq paid the price for others: she herself had lost her public voice, and indeed her public presence.

Beyond the long glass doors opening onto the balcony I could see that night had fallen, blotting out the crisp winter sky. When I stood to leave, Durriya led me to the other end of the room and down a long narrow hall into a corner room. It was a serious place with a large wooden desk and shelf upon shelf of books. From a series of bound leather volumes she retrieved one and handed it to me. It was one year in the life of the *Bint Al-Nil*. I was holding a treasure. I dreamed of losing myself in her office, roaming among her carefully kept records.

I left Durriya in her elegant salon and her serious study with a tinge of melancholy. Did I really see a deep sadness in the eyes under the defiantly pencilled eyebrows of this woman who had taken to the streets and had led a parliamentary sit-in — a woman who, at the orders of a powerful head of state unable to take criticism, had been condemned to a domestic cage? The contrast of my freedom and Durriya's imprisonment was doubly painful: what had happened, and why, if...?

It would be six years before I would see Durriya Shafiq again. By 1974 she had been released. Her liberty had come with the death of Nasser. Although she was free now, she did not seem free. If anything, she seemed more distant, somehow removed. The years of house arrest — and all that this implied — seemed to have taken their toll. By the time the cage had opened, the bird could not fly out.

A year later when I stopped in Cairo en route from Mogadishio to Oxford, I read the sad headlines in *Al-Ahram* on 21 September, 1975: "Tragic death of Dr Durriya Shafiq." She had fallen from the balcony of her sixth-floor apartment into the courtyard below. There was shock and, of course, speculation. The paper recited the accomplishments of Durriya Shafiq, "a feminist leader of the forties and fifties". As I read the litany I could hear Durriya Shafiq's voice, loud and clear, raised in triumph. She had accomplished her goal: thanks in part to her efforts, Egyptian women now had the right to vote.



## Global cooling

The Clean Air Act has the US firmly in its grip. Landing at JFK Airport, the first thing you hear is a mechanical twang informing passengers that they are not allowed to smoke in the airport, under any circumstance. Should they be possessed by an irresistible desire to sneak a puff, they had better not try to do it in the rest rooms, where a smoke detector awaits them, the latest model of Big Brother to pry into their private affairs. Well, in Rome... Packs of cigarettes and lighters disappear. The nicotine addicts quit their teeth and restrain their desire to growl at the security guards. Inevitably smokers promise themselves a puff at the first opportunity, and passengers proceed on their journey, only to discover soon enough that the act applies on every public premise across the country.

I happen to be a smoker, and have long borne the brunt of unpleasant remarks from colleagues and relatives, sung in the knowledge of my immunity. In the US, on the other hand, I felt like a common criminal craving a fix, my eyes furtively darting from corner to corner in the hope that I would find an out-of-the-way nook in which to indulge my embarrassing habit. Smokers, not unlike junkies, have no other alternative but to seek the shelter of a car park or a deserted street corner. Families with children have made their homes smoke-free, while the few restaurants which allow the dirty habit to be practiced at all between their walls invariably banish the culprits to the two tables which command the best view of the toilets, those at which no respectable patron would accept to be seen sitting. In subtle or not so subtle ways, smokers are relentlessly reminded that they not only endanger their own health but are constantly sinning against humanity.

John Grisham, the widely-read writer of best-selling thrillers, has quickly churned out a gripping page-turner about tobacco companies and how they have unscrupulously set out to create young nicotine addicts. Nothing short of completely ruining the tobacco companies by forcing them to pay punitive damages to sufferers from tobacco-related diseases will satisfy his protagonists.

By now all smokers residing in the US must be going around with a heavy conscience; it is not unusual to spot a lone smoker behind a car looking apologetic for every puff he/she draws. And they have good reason to feel guilty. Think about it: should they contract a tobacco-related illness, not only will it cost the nation (of non-smokers) to keep them in hospital or provide them with expensive medication, but they will endanger the lives of countless people around them who are forced to become passive smokers and therefore be liable to cost the nation. Nor does the debit list stop there: evil smokers will contribute to global warming, the pollution of the atmosphere and the enhancement of the greenhouse effect.

After years of cigarette advertisements showing smokers as cool, composed and going places, it has suddenly become as uncool to blow smoke in one's partner's face as it would be to blow soap bubbles at one's prospective boss. No matter. The Americans and their incumbent president feel that they have scored a great victory, and maybe they have. What is uncanny, though, is that suddenly, alcohol advertising seems to have replaced cigarettes on the small screen. One particular brand of beer claims that its drinkers contribute to global cooling, no less. Now, I am trying to get this right: should youngsters start consuming large amounts of cool beer to reverse the effects of global warming brought about by their parents' smoking? Has drinking replaced smoking as the new cool activity? Liquor is now being marketed in Britain — and soon the US — in forms attractive to youngsters: some "tropical fruit cocktail" drinks contain up to seven per cent alcohol, higher than the percentage in beer. One company is marketing an alcoholic beverage under a brand name and in packaging similar to that of a famous soft drink.

Should youngsters now reach for a can of beer rather than that cancer stick to be politically correct? Shift their allegiances from the lone cowboy to the intrepid mountain climber featured in one particular advertisement? How will that help the US? It takes a village [to bring up a child], Hillary Clinton (paraphrasing the title of her book) told an enraptured audience, when delivering her famous speech to the Democratic Convention. Is the village pub included in this labour of love?

We can only admire the US president and the Congress for wanting to protect the life and health of American citizens. What seems strange is that, to do so, they have touted cigarettes as the number-one killer, trying to detract attention from the very real problems of drug abuse, alcoholism, and the free use of weapons.

Let us be serious. Who knows cigarette smokers who are so under the influence that they beat their wives, go on joy rides and kill innocent pedestrians? Who has heard of a smoker who develops delirium tremens or pulls a gun on people he does not know? How much do rehab centres cost the nation? How much do jails? But then again, who says that we understand the complex politics of power struggles?

Fayza Hassan

### Supra Dayma

#### Beef olives

Ingredients:  
1 kg thin beef steaks  
3 tbsp onion juice  
2 tbsp lemon juice  
1/4 cup pitted green pickled olives  
1/4 kg cooked minced meat  
1 bunch parsley (finely chopped)  
Butter  
Salt+pepper+allspice+nutmeg

Method:  
Season the beef steaks with the onion juice, the lemon juice, and some of the spices and leave to marinate overnight or at least for two hours. Mix the minced meat with the olives and parsley, then start filling the beef steaks with this mixture, and roll the steak over with the stuffing in the middle. Close the ends with a toothpick. Finish all the beef steaks and set aside. In a cooking pan, melt some butter and gently fry the olive-stuffed beef steaks until golden, then add boiling water and the remaining spices. Cover the pan and bring to boil. Place in an oven dish, cover it and leave to cook in the oven, checking every now and then if it needs any water. The oven should be set and preheated at medium heat. Remove from the oven and allow to cool. Then remove the toothpicks from each roll and place them on a serving plate. Serve with either rice or macaroni and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

### Restaurant review

## Fast and fresh

Nigel Ryan on a more traditional quick fix

One of my predecessors in this space, Lesley Stones, was a great fan of Chabrawi's. It helped, of course, that she lived around the corner, which I do not. But remembering her heartfelt recommendations I made the journey to Heliopolis at what I suppose must have been the worst possible time. Stuck in traffic for hours, crawling at a snail's pace, hungry when I set out, I was quite ravenous on arrival.

Chabrawi's is a cheery place, cherry red windows, a long granite counter, a flight of steps up to the first floor dining room, tables arranged in the window on the ground floor. It is invariably busy, but the staff are polite and efficient, customers arrive and eat and then depart, so it is always possible to get a table.

Despite the restrained nod in the direction of post-modernism — the sleek red laminated window frames set in a mock-Islamic, arched facade — the menu is traditional. This is, after all, a *fisad* and *tammy* shop, which has expanded its repertoire, and its interior, to catch customers who are not necessarily in a rush or overly desirous to stand with a sandwich in a crowd.

There is no sawdust on the floor here — instead neat tiles, neat polished tables and wrought iron chairs. There is an extensive salad bar, among which is included excellent *tabbouleh*, and delicious *bessara*. Everything is fresh, which I am afraid is not par for the course at other establishments, where salad ingredients more often than not look as if they have been boiled for hours and only then left in the midday sun, for an hour or two, to wilt.

Chabrawi's, Damascus Street, Korba, Heliopolis

clusively vegetarian. The only bit of animal to appear on the menu is that traditional standby, *basurma*. I duly ordered an omelette with the same. My companion asked for eggs *shakshouka*, and we both ordered salads.

There is a tendency to be a snob about beetroot, something that I have never quite understood. Beetroot, as long as they have not been allowed to grow too big, and are not pickled in cheap vinegar, are much underrated. And the beetroot at Chabrawi's is fine. The potato salad was passable, if a little commercial, there were delicious pickled onions and a pleasant concoction of cheese, tomatoes, cucumber and green peppers. Such is the selection that it is impossible to taste everything. The only disappointment in my selection was a peculiar cabbage salad that was partially fermented and could not quite make up its mind whether it was coleslaw or sauerkraut.

Omelettes, of course, cannot be left hanging around. They must be served immediately they are cooked, which is precisely what happened. The *shakshouka*, I was told, was fine.

We had orange juice, freshly squeezed, and mineral water, and the bill, at the end of lunch, came to less than LE20, which to my mind represents excellent value. So if you do happen to be in Heliopolis, and in need of a quick lunch but cannot face traditional fast food, try the real thing. It is fast, wholesome, spotlessly clean, and what is more, it is real food.

Chabrawi's, Damascus Street, Korba, Heliopolis

### Al-Ahram Weekly

#### Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

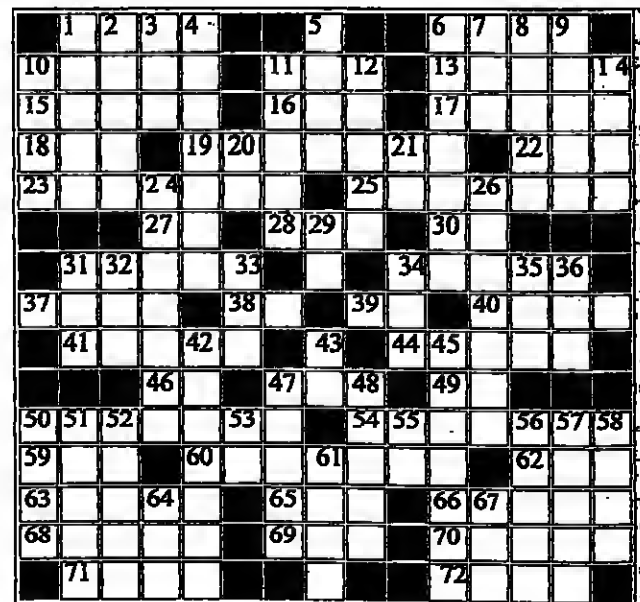
#### ACROSS

1. Fardel (4)
6. In the time of, abb. (4)
10. Abject fear (5)
11. Person-bird (3)
13. Nurtures, posterior (5)
15. Runs at steady pace (5)
16. Fall apart, moulder (3)
17. Genus of bitter herbs, pl. (5)
18. Forelimb (3)
19. Hindmost part, hyph. wds. (7)
22. Hen-bird of ruff (3)
23. Full bloom of youth, pl. (7)
25. Regular course of procedure (7)
27. Similar (2)
28. Human being (3)
30. Symbol for "cobalt" (2)
31. Plastic fiber (5)
34. Hanker (5)
37. Coterie; band of brigands (4)
38. Mr. Pacino (2)

DOWN

1. Dancer's horizontal hold to keep balance (5)
2. Lack of usual social standards in group (5)
3. Illuminated (3)
4. Rapture (7)
5. Tarn (4)
6. Calumniate (7)
7. Type of fish (3)
8. New Zealand aborigine (5)

39. One bro parent (2)
40. European river (4)
41. Type of communication (5)
44. Joint fund (5)
45. Symbol for "einsteinium" (2)
47. Moke (3)
49. Musical note (2)
50. Fastened wings of poultry before cooking (7)
54. Responsibilities (7)
59. Soften flax by exposing to moisture (3)
60. Sentiment, feeling (7)
62. First lady (3)
63. What Rada Pahlevi was (5)
65. Ump (3)
66. Islands of Asia Minor formerly colonised by Greece (5)
68. Pertaining to apples (5)
69. Biblical high priest (3)
70. At the age of consent (5)
71. Comb. form for "far" (4)
72. Promontory (4)

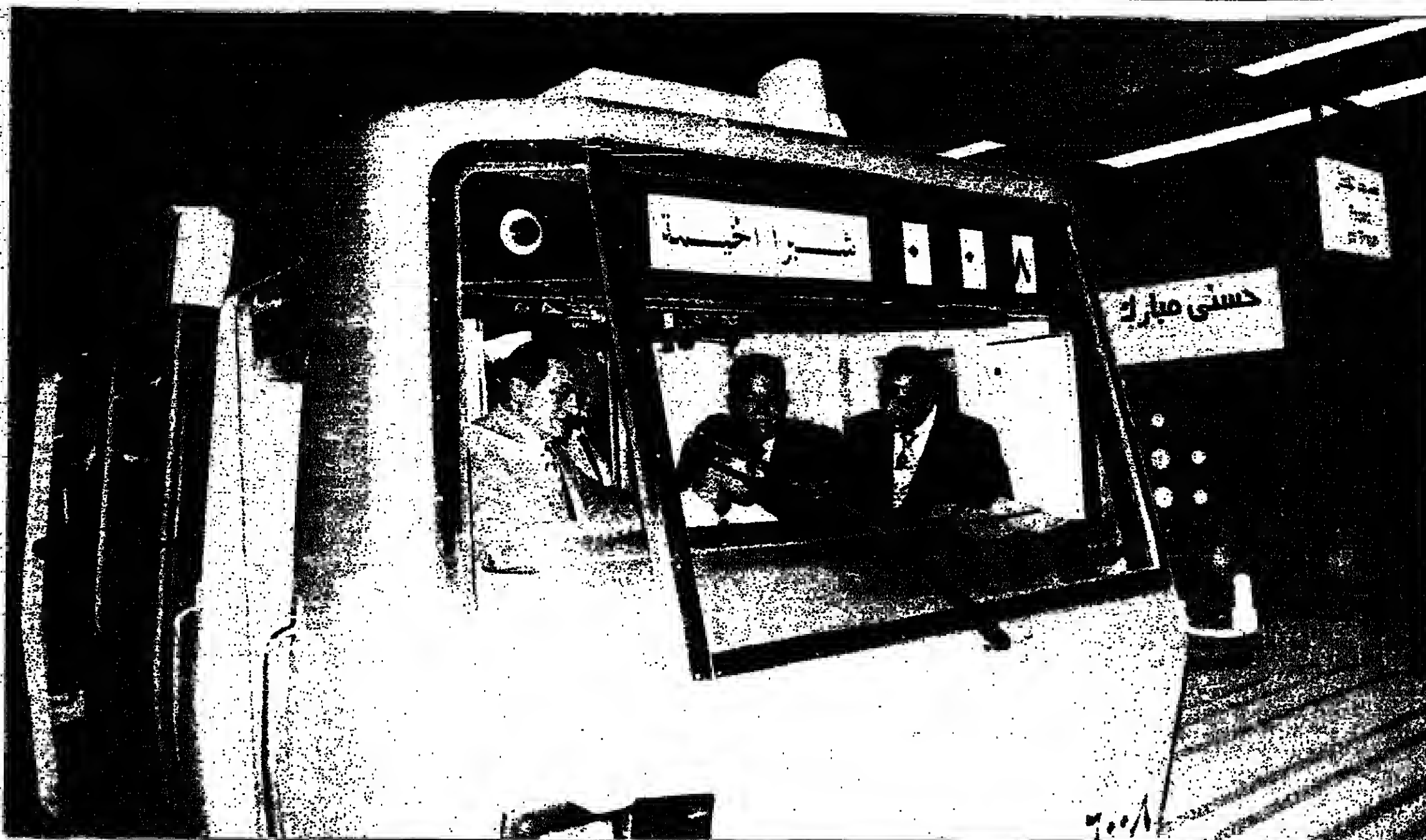


9. Exult in; groom (5)
10. Ancient Egyptian divinity, creator of gods and men (4)
11. Refracting glass (5)
12. Endless (5)
14. Weather abb. (4)
20. Affirmative response (2)
21. Negation (2)
24. Sage; hangs down (7)
26. Kitchen apparatus (7)
29. Public notice (2)
31. Cistern (3)
32. Chemical suffix (3)
33. Loose (3)
34. Tamed ox of Tibet (3)
35. Workman who refuses to join strike (3)
36. Negative response (3)
42. Basis (7)
43. We (2)
45. What Rada Pahlevi was (4)
47. Carry the torch for (5)
48. Some films (5)
50. Vehicle for carrying passengers (4)
51. Presided once more (5)
52. Useful (5)
53. Printing measure (5)
54. Exclamation of surprise (3)
56. Sort (5)
57. Degradations; sins (5)
58. Chair (4)
61. Narrate (4)
64. Pain (3)
67. Epic (3)

هكذا من الأصل



**The Middle East and Africa's first and only underground metro system now features a newly-inaugurated line two. Meanwhile, Cairenes are looking forward to the completion of a third line**



PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak inaugurated on Tuesday another phase of what he described as Egypt's "giant project and the fastest and cleanest means of public transport", reports Nevine Khalil. Mubarak spoke at the Ramses underground station before embarking on a ride to Rod El-Farg station in the north, marking the opening of the first section of the second line of Cairo's underground network.

"This project carries special importance for Egyptian commuters because it increases their freedom of movement," Mubarak told reporters. Detailing the merits of the metro network, he said it would ease traffic congestion in the capital with a population of 12 million people. "Every Egyptian is proud of this project," Mubarak said,

adding that it paves the way for Egypt to enter the next century "when Cairo will be able to handle dense traffic and make commuters' lives easier."

The first 8-kilometre section, connecting Shubra El-Kheima in the north and Ramses Square downtown, is expected to carry 850,000 commuters a day, and will use computerised safety measures, escalators and lifts for the disabled.

The inauguration was attended by a number of dignitaries including Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, Minister of Transport Soliman Metwalli, Minister of Information Safwat El-Sherif, politicians and journalists.

Before unveiling the inauguration plaque, Mubarak listened to a briefing by Metwalli who cited obstacles which were overcome while building Cairo's underground system: namely how to deal with above-ground traffic during construction, digging into Cairo's weak soil, financing the ambitious project, and finally how Egyptians will run operations once foreign experts leave.

El-Husseini Abdel-Salam, head of the National Authority for Tunnels (NAT), told his audience that safety measures were given top priority during planning and construction. At the end of the ceremony Mubarak was presented with the NAT Shield and took his position in the driver's cabin for a 45-minute ride to Rod El-Farg station.

During the trip he listened to a detailed description from the driver of how to operate the train.

The first line, between El-Marg in the north and Helwan in the south, serves more than a million passengers a day, most of whom spent Tuesday morning in spectacular traffic jams while the president inaugurated the new line. For security reasons, sections of the underground were sealed off for six hours, turning tens of thousands of passengers to above-ground transport. The influx caused havoc on the streets, and as some marched to work on foot, bumper to bumper traffic ensured that no one was going to make it to work on time.

## Underground gains more ground

Moving 12 million people through Cairo is now twice as easy. Dina Ezzat rides the new metro line

Ramses is perhaps Cairo's busiest square. Home to the nation's main train station, mini-bus, bus, and service taxi terminals, the square is also smack in the middle of the capital's most populated neighbourhoods.

During peak hours, at any given moment, a minimum of 2,000 people pass through Ramses Square. On a typical afternoon the square is bustling with cars zigzagging their way through dense traffic jams, civil servants fighting to squeeze themselves onto packed buses to get home and pedestrians who cheat fate every time they cross the streets.

Underground, it is a different scene: at Ramses Square's Mubarak metro station, traffic runs smoothly. Women and men queue up for their tickets, stop at the underground newspaper stall to buy the evening paper to read on the train, and on the platform, people awaiting the train watch television.

Today, this picture has an added element as passengers make use of new escalators moving between the platforms of line one and the newly inaugurated line two. The two lines are built on top of each other and Mubarak station is the connection station.

The tracks of the first phase of line two extend eight kilometres from Shubra El-Kheima, a northern Cairo suburb to Ramses Square. On the way from Shubra, the metro trains stop at seven stations before arriving at the Mubarak station. Each stop has its own décor consistent with the nature of its neighbourhood.

For example the walls of the St Theresa station are decorated with abstract designs on ceramic symbolising the sentiments of national unity between Muslims and Copts. The interior designs of the Rod El-Farg station reflect the area's fame as an old vegetable market.

"The trains will be carrying about 600,000 passengers a day. It takes more than 400 buses to do the same job," said El-Husseini Abdel-Salam, chairman of the National Authority for Tunnels.

Since it takes the metro less than 15 minutes to move from Shubra El-Kheima to Ramses Square, passengers will now save time as it could take a bus up to one hour to complete the same journey.

The first phase of line two encompasses four different types of construction. Some 0.9 kilometres are constructed at ground level; 1.5 kilometres are built on a viaduct; and 1.4 kilometres are a tunnel constructed by cut-and-cover methods. The rest is built as a bored tunnel using shield driven tunnelling methods.

The underground stations, one of which is built under the water of El-Isma'ia canal, near Rod-El-Farg station, are either two or three level stations. The top level will be dedicated to the ticket windows, the second to operation equipment, and the bottom one to platforms.

All are equipped with escalators. "When we built the first line we did not dig deep. The platforms are built at 6 metres under-ground, which is the equivalent of two floors, so we did not need escalators; the stairs were enough," said Abdel-Salam. But with line two, the digging went down about 17 metres underground, hence the need for escalators.

Elevators are also built available in some stations, mainly to cater to the needs of the disabled. Most of the elevators are located in the three-floor stops. "We thought that this is where the disabled would find it difficult to depend on the escalators," said Abdel-Salam.

At the beginning of July, the National Authority for Tunnels started a three-month-long dry run of the new line. The testing covered the new tracks and trains, driver skills, and the readiness of maintenance and control staff to deal with hypothetical emergency situations. The testing ended on 30 September, and all was given the OK signal.

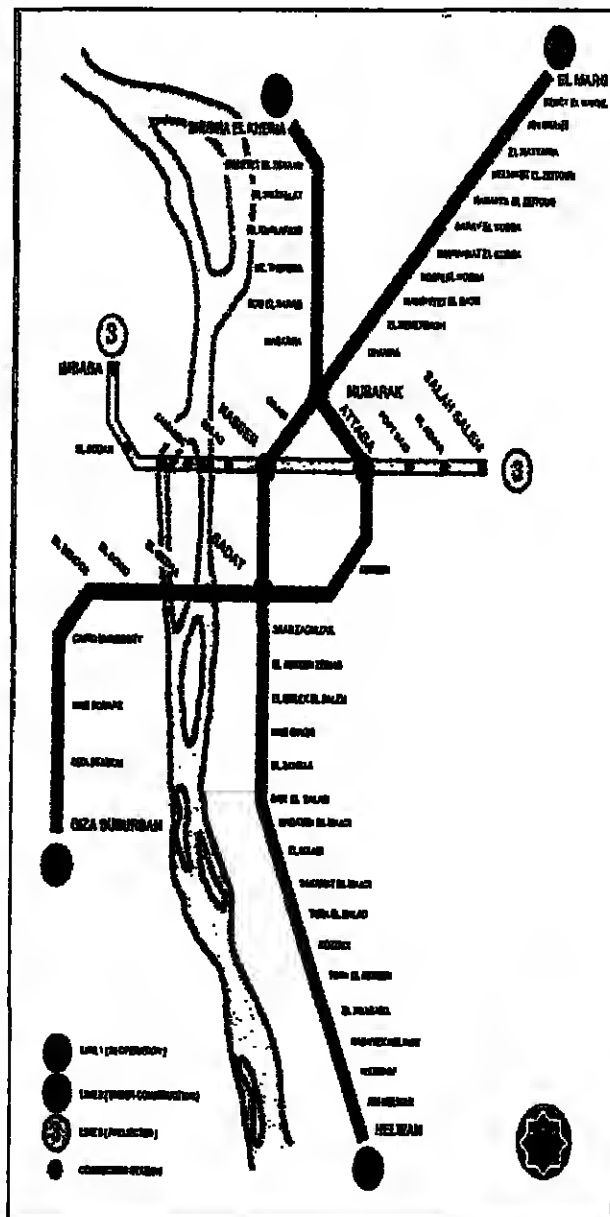
"It will be great when the metro starts working," said Mohammed Abdallah, a resident of Shubra. Speaking near the construction site of the Shubra El-Kheima



Commuters can now enjoy the fruits of years of construction (top left). The women's carriage (bottom left) and a diagram of plans for the complete underground metro (right)

Photo: Sherif Saib

Photo: Antoine Albert



### A carriage apart

A ride on the women's carriage of the underground metro is never boring

The metro is pulling into Sadat station. Meanwhile, scores of women are rushing out of the ticket gates and running to the far end of the platform. They are hoping to catch the first two carriages that follow the driver's compartment — the women's carriages.

Passengers range from women dressed in head-to-toe black veils, blue jeans or sleeveless T-shirts. They are carrying their shopping bags, holding on tightly to the little hands of their children and, as the train rolls into the station, manoeuvring for a place before the doors of the women's carriages.

When the National Authority for Tunnels decided to allocate a special carriage for women on the underground metro, there was a big hue and cry. Some praised the idea as a sign of respect for women. Others criticised it as a gesture of backwardness. Moderates thought that in the absence of adequate enforcement of anti-harassment laws it was a practical idea.

Sara is 23 years old. For the last two years, she has been riding the metro to work every day. "I did not like to ride the women's carriages in the beginning. I thought it was more practical to be on the middle carriage, which is practically located opposite the ticket gates," she said.

But it did not take Sara long to alter this pattern. After about three months, she turned into a dedicated rider of the women's carriages. The reasons, or rather motives, are all related to men's attitudes. "If the carriage I am riding is too crowded, then men make comments suggesting that women should not be on that mixed carriage." And, "if some man brushes himself against a woman and she complains she is always told to confine herself to the ladies' carriage," Sara explained.

But harassment aside, the women's carriage is over full.

Unlike the other carriages, the women's is never silent. There is always a lively debate going on: a woman who is discussing the alternatives of day care services, another who is passing on a tip about a wholesale store, or a third who is helping a complete stranger with her toddler to allow the woman a few minutes to nurse a new-born.

Even in the holy month of Ramadan when the other carriages are full of fasting passengers who fall asleep on their way home, the women's carriage is still lively. Women exchange ideas on new, nourishing and inexpensive recipes for the iftar meal breaking the day long fast, or discuss the best and least costly schemes to meet the many demands of the feast.

As Sara puts it: "It is always interesting. Even when they discuss their fights with their husbands it is still interesting to hear how they deal with their problems. It gives me ideas for the future."

station weeks before President Mubarak inaugurated the new line, Abdallah said he could not wait for the day when he can depend on the "clean and civilised" metro to take him close to his home in Heliopolis instead of the crowded and chaotic buses.

Since the first line was open to the public in the late 1980s, the underground metro has established itself as a favourite means of transportation for many people from different walks of life.

The main attraction, according to many dedicated underground riders, is the trains' punctuality. At the 33 stations of line one, which extends over 40 kilometres to connect El-Marg, north of Cairo, with Helwan, at the southern fringe of the capital, there is a train that stops every five minutes or so. "The train used to be even more punctual," said Doreya, a civil servant who rides the train twice every working day from her house near Ghamra stop to her workplace which is not very far from the Sadat station at Tahrir. "But still, it is much better than the buses for which you may wait for up to an hour," she added.

Since the trains run more frequently, they are not as crowded as the buses. Air conditioning makes the trips underground a luxurious experience in the long summer months, compared to the sweaty bustle and bustle of a bus ride.

Once the train arrives, passengers can easily estimate how long it takes to get to their destinations.

According to Mayssa, a Cairo university student, on exam days she can only trust the metro to help her get to university on time.

For others the underground is a good way of economising. It is much more economical than taking taxis. Even for those who have cars it is still a good bargain.

"I drive my car from my home in Heliopolis for about 15 minutes to the Serry El-Qoba station, park it there, then get on the metro to my office in Maadi," explained Mona, a secretary at a private food processing company. "Not only does it take less time but also it saves money in terms of gas and car repair," she said. The one-way ticket from Ghamra to Maadi costs 50 piastres; by taxi the trip could cost several pounds. "The underground also spares me the hassle of driving such a long trip from Heliopolis to Maadi," Mona added.

Every day, line one makes some 360 trips that help over a million passengers move around the capital and its suburbs.

The route of this line represents approximately 30 per cent of the total volume of the public transport demand in Cairo. Its construction started in 1981, and with Egyptian-French cooperation, its first phase connecting Helwan with the centre of Cairo was inaugurated in 1987. The second phase to El-Marg was completed in 1989.

For a long time the underground metro was praised as a smooth-running operation. However, over the last year, a number of accidents brought the National Authority for Tunnels under fire. Complaints included breaking speed limits and poor maintenance of trains, tracks and ticket machines.

"Accidents are bound to happen, and statistically the

Cairo metro network has a much lower rate of accidents, especially serious ones, than its counterparts in big Western cities," said Chairman Abdel-Salam. He added, "Also, most of the accidents that have occurred are not so serious."

Abdel-Salam's definition of a not-so-serious accident involves the train gates closing on an arm or a leg of a passenger who was trying to get on or off a train that was about to leave the station. This, he said, is due to the fact that passengers ignore the warning signal that the door is about to close. And, according to the chairman of the National Authority for Tunnels, these accidents are not so frequent.

When all is said and done, Cairo's underground metro, many agree, is the answer to the transportation problems of many people.

By this time next year, the second part of the first phase of line two should be open. This section will run from Ramses Square across the Abdin neighbourhood down to Tahrir Square where it connects with line one at the Sadat station. Before the year 2000, line two will be extended to the Giza suburb, where Cairo University is located. The university has more than 150,000 students.

Next century, the National Authority for Tunnels will start working on line three that will connect Imbaba in the west with Salah Salem in the east, linking the suburbs of Heliopolis and Nasr City with downtown and the Al-Azhar area.

Cairo's underground metro is the first such network in Africa and the Arab world.



# Pilgrim to an ancient site

'Abu Mina', as the local bedouins call it, was one of the great sites of Christian antiquity. Jill Kamil describes her visit to the new monastery and the ancient settlement

We approached the Monastery of Saint Mina from Burg El-Arab on the northern coast, west of Alexandria. Even from a distance the edifice rose in splendour above the flatland, eight cupolas piercing the blue Mediterranean sky. We had come to one of the great destinations of pilgrimage early in the Christian era and a site which has been, since 1979, on the World Heritage List as one among the five most historically important sites in Egypt.

Our plan was to tour the new monastery, which lies behind high enclosure walls, and then take a look at the original settlement some 500 metres to the south.

The monastery is, in a word, impressive. One of the great projects of the late Pope Kyrillos from the time of his consecration as patriarch in 1959 was to rebuild the Monastery of St Mina on its ancient site in the desert of Maryut. The result is splendid. Four new churches are being constructed within the 15-feddin area granted to the Coptic patriarchate, and huge structures for the laity flank the entrance.

An imposing cathedral dominates the enclosure. Shaped like a cross, its four points represent the apostles and the dome of heaven. Despite its unfinished state, construction actually started in 1970, a service was in progress during our visit. A white-robed priest stood with his back to the congregation, harmonious sounds filled the air, children in their Friday-best moved along the aisles, and swallows flitted, twittering, around the columns. The finest materials were used for the construction of this church built in honour of Saint Mina: marble from Italy, black granite from Aswan.

I noticed the deeply carved capitals of the columns with vine and acanthus leaf motifs, as well as



The ancient settlement lies 500m from the Monastery of Abu Mina, traditionally a place of healing

bunches of grapes and crosses reminiscent of Coptic themes. Others featured the basket-weave technique typical of Byzantium. Stained-glass windows, set in white plaster, cast coloured light on the marble floor. The walls are decorated with a plethora of crosses in filigree, mosaic, and colour combinations that defy description. We could not help but wonder what Saint Mina would have thought of all this opulence.

According to widespread tradition, the saint was born of wealthy parents in Phrygia in Asia Minor. He declared himself a Christian at the time of the terrible persecutions of Emperor Diocletian and refused to take part in the required imperial sacrifices. He was beheaded for his beliefs and his body was rescued by his troops to be transported to Egypt. His burial in the desert of Maryut in the middle of the fifth century gave rise to the belief that the site was a place of healing. With time, it attracted more and more pilgrims, until the small church built in

memory of the saint became too small to accommodate the pilgrims. Emperor Arcadius built a new one, the Great Basilica, to which the relics of the saint were transferred.

Stories about Saint Mina and the holy site abound. One of the most widely circulated tales relates how the camels that carried the saint's coffin to Egypt refused to move beyond a certain point, the spot where it was decided to bury him. Another story tells how a lame boy who saw a shining light over the tomb, walked across it and was cured.

There are other miracles attributed to the therapeutic effect of the water of a well near the site. Constantine the Great's only daughter, who suffered from leprosy, was healed there. And a poor shepherd's sick lamb, who rolled on the ground near the tomb, was also miraculously healed. A great city grew around the sacred area and flourished for 700 years before it fell victim to earthquakes, raids and, finally, pillage by people seeking stone with which

to build their own houses.

The ancient remains of this great city was our next destination. It is a huge archaeological site found in 1905 by a German archaeologist who first identified it with Abu Mina. We walked through the ruins of the Great Basilica, as well as the pilgrimage square surrounded by the hostels where the monks took care of the sick, and the labyrinthine ruins that were obviously cells, refectories and stone-chambers. The famous Baths of Saint Mina were off-limits, bounded by an iron rail, but we were able to look down into what was once the place of the healing waters.

How many times have I seen in the Coptic Museum of Cairo, ampullae that bear the portrait of Saint Mina, the camel and a Greek inscription. But not until I stood at the ancient site did they become meaningful. Looking at the ruins of the private homes of the faithful, their streets, shops and storage areas, I imagined the entire urban area as it was

in its heyday, with the pious flocking towards the place of healing. I pictured people praying at the tomb of the saint and accepting ampullae of holy water from the monks.

Looking across the expansive archaeological site, towards the new monastery, I marvelled at the remarkable continuity of culture in Egypt. Places that have once held an aura of sanctity might be destroyed by man or natural forces. They might be pillaged, flooded, obscured by sand and silt, but once the modern archaeologist wields his pickaxe and the site is rediscovered, it rekindles a light in the communal memory. Pilgrims flock back.

We visited the Monastery of Saint Mina on a Friday. By the time we walked back to the car park, from our tour round the ancient site, it was only 11am but already there were 110 cars, 20 minibuses and 25 coaches crammed with the faithful. All appeared to be Egyptians, most were families with several children, and all were in a festive mood.

photos: Michael Stock

## Friendly exchange

Egypt in the eyes of young Tunisians and Tunisia in the eyes of young Egyptians was the theme of first-hand summer contacts. Sherine Nasr tunes in

Summer provides a golden opportunity for young people, Egyptians and Arabs, to tour Arab states and share knowledge. This year, a major cultural exchange took place between Egypt and Tunisia when 150 young Tunisians, representing its 25 different governorates, made their way to Egypt in an attempt to grasp the essence of "The Mother of the World," as one of them described it. The journey began soon after an Egyptian group of the same size returned from Tunisia.

Both groups were selected from among the best university students, particularly those who had played an active role in volunteer work.

The Tunisian group's journey began when three buses left Tunis, the country's capital, travelling to Sfax and Sousse (Susa) on the Mediterranean where they collected more students before continuing to Egypt. "The journey took us three days before we finally reached Marsa Matruh," said Youssef Belhadi, a 20-year-old student of French literature. "Turning as it was, it was a good chance to determine how independent we could be," Belhadi said.

Their visit to Egypt, they thought, would be of a historical nature. "Yet, when we reached our des-

tination, we discovered that the people, the weather, even the local markets were as enjoyable as the grand historic sites," Belhadi said.

The programme for the Tunisians was set up by the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA) and the Institut du Tourisme, which operates under the auspices of the Supreme Council of Youth and Sports. The Tunisian group visited all the main attractions in Alexandria, Ismailia, Port Said and Cairo.

When in Cairo, Fouad Al-Awadi realised his dream of visiting the Khan El-Khalili bazaar, Al-Husseini Mosque, and sitting at the famous El-Fishawy Cafe. "I wanted to feel Cairo as described in Naguib Mahfouz's writings. Now, I understand why he is such a creative writer," Al-Awadi said.

Belhadi had an altogether different kind of experience. An overwhelming sense of grandeur struck her as she stood before the Pyramids. "The old monuments look more attractive than in travel brochures. The Pyramids are truly awesome. The Sound and Light show was fantastic!" she exclaimed.

Local markets were the most attractive aspect of Egypt for Samia Torky. "While in Alexandria, I visited the busy Khalid Ibn El-Waleed Street in

Miami. I also spent a day at Souk Zan'et El-Setta," she added. Her purchases betrayed her special interest in ancient Egypt. "I bought a copper statue of the sphinx, silver rings decorated with hieroglyphic inscriptions and cotton T-shirts with the Pyramids on them," she said. Torky saw a similarity between the Egyptian and Tunisian markets but admitted that "the Egyptian ones were more vivid and much more crowded."

Mohamed El-Tayeb was attracted to the Egyptian people. Other nations have their historical and cultural heritage but it is the people that make Egypt unique, especially for an Arab tourist like himself, he said. "They are genuine, spontaneous and kind. Here I feel completely at home," he added.

During their free hours, many of the Tunisians used their day independently to public theatres and cinemas to watch the latest performances. "I will make sure to watch Nasser 56 before I go home," Belhadi said.

Egyptian students expressed a similar enthusiasm towards Tunisia, Monastir, Gabes, Sousse and Tunis were their primary destinations. "We visited the top historical attractions, including the Qairawan

Mosque and spent a day on the Mediterranean in Hammamet, the Tunisian equivalent of Alexandria," said Ahmed El-Kashef, a Faculty of Commerce graduate.

Riham Ali was impressed by the greenery, the beauty of the environment and the clear atmosphere. "Tunisia has justly been named Land of the Green," she said. The buildings, too, stand in absolute harmony with nature. "They are European-style, three-storied white buildings," Ali said.

While in Sousse and Gabes, the Egyptians discovered that on specified days, each city turns into a local market. "There were all types of commodities, including leather products which were sold at very reasonable prices," Ali said.

Among the most memorable events of the trip, was a Tunisian wedding the Egyptian students attended, and an Egyptian night, where a folklore troupe performed and Egyptian commodities and food were offered. "It was a successful promotion for

Egypt," said Afifi, one of the Egyptian students.

Both groups were provided with accommodations in youth hostels.

Young people interested in travelling with the caravan, which is due to tour another Arab country next summer, should apply to the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports. An interview and three-day workshop will be required to determine those most qualified to represent Egypt.

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet  
Super Jet stations are located in Alexandria (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hershah and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria  
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Alexandria and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.

A VIP bus with phone access leaves Alexandria at 7.15pm. Tickets from Alexandria LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh  
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Alexandria and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.

Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman  
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE33.

Cairo-Port Said  
Services every half hour from 6am to 10pm, then 10am, 11am, 12pm and 4.30pm, from Alexandria, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said  
Service 6.45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria, departs Port Said 7.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hershah  
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Alexandria, departs Hershah 11pm, from Tahrir, then Alexandria. Tickets LE40 each way.

Alexandria-Hershah  
Services 8am, from Ramses Square, Alexandria, departs Hershah 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Alexandria, departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company  
Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalait (near Ramses Square), Alexandria and Tahrir Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassia Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia  
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalait, then Alexandria and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE25, one way.

Cairo-Suez  
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalait, then Alexandria and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE25, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish  
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalait, then Alexandria and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE25, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Services every 45 min, from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassia, then Alexandria.

### Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nawelba  
Service Bus, from Abbassia, then Alexandria. Tickets LE31.

West Delta Bus Company  
Stations at Tahrir and Alexandria. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hershah  
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safage  
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qassir  
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor  
Service Bus. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan  
Service Bus. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains  
Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 147 or 375-3355.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan  
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm and 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE31; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm and 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE31; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

"French" trains. Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said  
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir  
There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir, July 894-8999. Offices 392-3444, or Helwan 759-9886.

Cairo-Aswan  
Tel. LE300 for Egyptians, LE991 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor  
Tel. LE220 for Egyptians, LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hershah  
Tel. LE238 for Egyptians, LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Suez  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-El-Arish  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Ismailia  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Port Said  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Alexandria  
Tel. LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

## Fourth time lucky

Next week, the International Arab Travel Market (IATM) will open its doors. Rehab Saad previews the event

The fourth round of the IATM will be held between 8-11 October at Cairo International Conference Centre.

"The aim is to promote Arab tourism in general and Egyptian tourism industry in particular. It is going to extend over an area of 6,000 sqm and will include 92 booths featuring a wide variety of products, Egyptian, Arab and international," said Mohamed Hafez, the organiser of the market. Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Singapore, Greece, England, India, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, Indonesia and Zimbabwe are among the most important participants. "When 500 or 600 Arab and foreign exhibitors come to Cairo to attend, this in itself is a substantial tourist income," Hafez said.

IATM will be attended by 78 exhibitors representing 24 foreign and Arab countries. The market is organised by Tourist Life Group under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Tourism, the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA), the Egyptian Federation of Tourist Chambers as well as EgyptAir.

According to Adel Abdel-Aziz, head of the ETA, the Egyptian Federation of Tourist Chambers will provide an opportunity for cooperation between the Arab countries to attract a larger share of international tourism to the region and also encourage joint investment projects. "The achievements of the Egyptian tourism industry, especially in touristic development, will be displayed on a 3,000 sqm area," said Abdel-Aziz.

Two seminars will be held alongside the market. One will deal with tourism between Europe and the Middle East with Africa as a final destination. The second will be about the successful touristic experience of various Asian countries and how Egypt and the Arab countries might benefit from it. Speakers will be tourism experts from Hong Kong, China, the Ivory Coast, South Africa, Syria, Thailand and Malaysia.

"This year, there will be workshops in addition to the seminars where exhibitors and businessmen will have an opportunity to meet in closed sessions," Hafez said.

EgyptAir, as the official carrier of the market, is offering facilities to the participants. Fahim Rayyan, board chairman of the national airline, said, "We are giving free tickets to the heads of delegations and 50 per cent discount to all participants. This is in addition to our booth at the market which will be equipped with computers to confirm bookings and provide posters and maps as well as information on the activities of EgyptAir."

Nagwa Ennsad, public relations director of Sonesta Hotels, which did good business last year and finalised some contracts with exhibitors from South Africa, felt that the market should get more support from the government, tourism officials and businessmen. "There should be joint cooperation between organisers and

big travel agencies in an effort to make the market the biggest in the Middle East," she said. Setting a fixed date for the market is another suggestion she made. "There are set dates for other big markets in the world like the ITB in Germany and the World Travel Market of London," she said. She pointed out that this year's market in Cairo is going to coincide with the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) congress which is due to be held on 6 October in Bangkok and could have an adverse effect on the attendance of tourist decision makers.

Ashraf Tantawi, marketing manager of Menouras, said: "This is the fourth round for the IATM and it is premature to evaluate it. However, it should be supported by travel agencies," he said.

Delegates to the market will find themselves well entertained. Several dinner parties will be held by the organisers of the market, the Ministry of Tourism and EgyptAir.

## Pre-dynastic tombs

Samir Naoum describes a pre-dynastic burial ground recently discovered in the Delta

A RESIDENTIAL area dating back to 3000BC has been unearthed at Tel El-Dab'a, near what was once one of the Nile's seven branches. "Two hundred and fifty tombs have been found in the adjacent burial ground," said Mohamed Abdel-Fattah, director of South Dakelhya antiquities. The site occupies an area of 10 feddans, and archaeologists have been excavating the area since 1989, unearthing tombs, some of which date back to the pre-dynastic period.

"All the skeletons were found in fetal positions. Some were in oval-shaped holes in the ground, while others were found in mud-brick tombs or mud containers," said Abdel-Fattah. "The tombs vary in size from 80cm to 2.5 metres. Some of the brick

tombs have two or three chambers, parts of which contain funerary items," he continued.

Saleem Gabr, chief inspector of the area, said that the skeletons were covered with linen, as were the insides of the tombs. "This procedure helped keep the skeletons intact," he explained.

In recent years, sites in the Delta have added more to our knowledge of ancient communities than was ever known before. Previously, most of our knowledge of early communities came from Upper Egypt. The pottery, alabaster and schist vessels from Tel El-Dab'a are similar to those discovered earlier in other Delta areas, such as Menshaty, Abu Omar in the Sharqiya Governorate, both with regard to their shape

and contents.

Greco-Roman antiquities have also been uncovered in the upper strata and, in some areas, in the same strata as the pre-dynastic tombs. Archaeologists point out, however, that the early residential area is the most interesting discovery because it reveals, for the first time, an urban area as it was, complete with soot in the ovens, cooking pots, knives and other implements. Storage vessels were also found scattered near the tombs, but unfortunately most were cracked and badly damaged from subsoil water.

"The residents of El-Dab'a, it seems, liked to live near their graveyards," commented Abdel-Fattah. "They made use of available resources and built their dwellings of mud-brick."

هكذا من الأصل



After the African qualifications, Egyptian football veterans are bound for Spain next month courtesy of the FIFA 5-a-Side World Indoor Football Championship. Inas Mazhar and Eric Asomugha report



Photo: Mohamed Maslin

# Onwards to Spain

Egyptian football players, who missed the rough and tumble of the salad days, showed all the right stuff as they represented Egypt at the African qualification for the third World 5-a-Side Championship (Fut-sal) held in Cairo. Team captain Taher Abu Zeid, once Africa's best, will lead the national squad to Spain for the FIFA organised world tournament.

The triumph is but the latest in a series of upsets dished out by Egyptian teams that began with Ahli's victory at the 12th Arab League Championship Cup early in September. Arab Contractors, together with Zamalek, proving bookmakers wrong, followed suit making it to the semi-finals of African club competitions. Along the way the national under-17 and juniors teams defeated their Tunisian and Ethiopian opponents in the World Cup race.

The national team, as the new 5-a-side African champions will be the first to represent Africa at the world championships after making it through the preliminaries. Nigeria, the first African representative at Futsal four years ago, participated by special invitation.

The most delighted man on earth last Monday was assuredly Mimi Abdel-Hamid, the former national coach. Abdel-Hamid quit the national team's camp at the Olympic Centre in Maadi hours before Egypt's encounter against Ghana and was unable to share in the excitement first hand as the players received the African trophy. But, with the realisation that his efforts greatly contributed to the victory Abdel-Hamid could hardly have dwelt on his dispute with Egyptian Football Federation (EFF) board member Hazein El-Hawary.

The quarrel ensued following El-Hawary's alleged reneging on an agreement with Abdel-Hamid concerning team and tournament best player Tamer Ismail. By arrangement the athlete was to rejoin his Maadi team under the supervision of El-Hawary for its league match. Abdel-Hamid, however, refused Ismail permission to leave the camp, and after a long dispute Abdel-Hamid



A star was born in the tournament; Egypt's brilliant player Tamer Ismail (right) manoeuvring a player from Zaire

packed up and left the team. The EFF board accepted his resignation and replaced him with assistant coach Mohamed Abou Amin.

What began as a nightmare 6-6 draw match with Zimbabwe ended in a resounding victory for Egypt as the team went ahead to beat Ghana 2-1, Somalia 10-1 and Zaire 13-4.

The outcome of the Egypt-Zimbabwe encounter raised the eyebrows of some officials and fans prompting the question of whether the 5-a-Side is meant for older players or young talents. The Egyptian squad, initially taken by surprise by the youthful Zimbabweans made more than a dozen changes in comparison to their opponent's four. Another worry was laid to rest as the team went up against their strongest opponents,

the Ghanians. The cynics were bushed when the big guys defeated Ghana 2-1 in the highly anticipated match.

For silver medal winners Ghana, who thrashed Zaire 19-5 in a match described by one official as "c'est la catastrophe pour le Zaire", the loss to Egypt was not even remotely expected. "We played well, but it was unfortunate we lost to Egypt," said Ghanaian International Ahmed Felix who plays for Egyptian league holders Ahli.

While praising the level of organisation, Cephas Msipa, head of the Zimbabwean delegation, nonetheless was dissatisfied with the refereeing. Msipa attributed the team's loss to injuries sustained by his players. "It is significant that we brought an inexperienced team and they did their best and won the bronze," said Msipa who hopes that Zimbabwe will be considered to host the next competition.

Mukota Muteba, Zaire's team supervisor whose last minute decision to send in a substitute to help stave off Egypt's onslaught, made no difference to the outcome challenged the Egyptian team to play against Zaire in Belgium. "We were unable to bring our best team due to the time frame. They are all in Belgium," said Muteba.

Five countries, Egypt, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Somalia and Zaire participated in the five-day tournament. FIFA's representative in the tournament, Javier Ottero said the withdrawals and the low number of delegations participating was a result of the unfamiliarity of the game and partly due to financial considerations.

"Two teams, Ghana and Egypt, were superior and we hope as the game becomes more widely known the level of professionalism will rise. The FIFA is interested in aiding the success of the game in Africa. A few months ago, only Ghana and Egypt wanted to compete. But, through the help of Confederation Africaine de Football, an African championship was held," Ottero said.

## Quadruple gold

EGYPT brought home four gold medals, capturing fifth place for boys and third for girls, at the seventh Arab Juniors Athletics Championship in Tunisia last week. Thirteen Arab countries including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan and Palestine participated in the bi-annual event. The Egyptian team consisted of 21 athletes. Gold winners were Nader El-Husseini in the 110 metres hurdles, Ayman Hussein in the hammer, Heba Ahmed in the 5km walk and Ahmed Nagi in the shot-put.

## Busy season for fencers

IN PREPARATION for upcoming national, regional and international championships, the Egyptian Fencing Federation began its new season by organising the Cairo Club Competition last week. Mohamed Tahoun, responsible for fencing in the Cairo region, explained that the federation decided to hold national events every weekend to enhance team performance. According to Tahoun, these weekly events will benefit players who left the competition arena after the dispute between the federation and the national Olympic Committee. Tahoun added that these competitions will help in selecting a new national team.

## Goals galore

SECOND-HALF scoring sprees featured in the first round matches at the African Youth Championship this weekend. Nigeria, winners of the bi-annual event for a record four consecutive times since 1983, secured four goals in the final 17 minutes to humiliate preliminary qualifiers Chad 5-1 in Lagos.

Ghana, the other great West African reservoir of young talent, postponed the death knell to Senegal until Abu Idris broke the deadlock with only nine minutes left. Egypt, whose two titles places them second behind Nigeria on the honours list, scored five goals in the closing minutes of its match against Ethiopia in Cairo. Ahmed Abdel-Zaher, Sayed Abdel-Hafeez, Sameh Ismail, Mohamed Farouk, and Walid Salah all scored and the team won 5-0.

Zimbabwe punished its tiring opponent, the Indian Ocean island of Reunion, as Francis Genyire and Prosper Kadeurewe scored two goals with nine minutes left for a 2-0 win. Auja was indebted to players Kidal and Gui, whose late goals produced a 3-1 triumph in Luanda over Botswana, the surprise preliminary conquerors of Namibia. Kenya also suffered a two-goal defeat in Sudan to early goals from Hamad Kamal and Mohamed Mousa.

Mali, semi-finalists in the previous championship, appear to be serious contenders for the championship after defeating Mauritania 3-0 in Bamako. South Africa, whose results in under-age competitions have been largely disappointing, toyed with Mauritius in Johannesburg where Daniel Matsau scored twice.

Algeria, another nation with a poor record at the youth level, slumped 2-0 at home to Tunisia while Cote d'Ivoire virtually sealed a second-round spot by winning 1-0 in Benin. Return matches are scheduled for 18-20 October and the 11 overall winners will be joined in the second round later this year by defending champions Cameroon, Zambia and Tanzania.

## Tennis victories

MOROCCAN Karim Alami claimed the \$328,000 Sicilian International Championships title, after Romanian Adrian Panait retired due to "shoulder strain". For the unseeded Alami, 23, the 7-5, 2-1 victory on the Palermo clay was another high point in a successful season on the ATP tour. In May, Alami won his first ATP tour title, the ATP challenge in Atlanta, and became the first Moroccan to win an ATP Tour event. Alami is ranked 74th on the tour computer.

Playing his first tournament since winning the US Open, Pete Sampras easily disposed of the unseeded German Hendrik Dreckmann 7-5, 6-2 and 6-0 to win \$1 million at the Swiss Indoors tennis championships.

# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

The imperial magistrate, the judge of judges, the chief justice of Egypt was all titles bestowed upon a senior official in the Ottoman empire who, from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century, was commissioned to Egypt from Istanbul. It was on this powerful figure that *Al-Ahram* cast its focus during the period from 1899 to 1901.

For nearly 400 years, the imperial magistrate was the second most powerful person in Egypt after the pasha (the wali or governor) and would assume the responsibilities of governor in the pasha's absence. The *frman* (imperial decree) promulgated upon his appointment was replete with grandiloquent epithets of honour such as "the consummate judge of the Muslims, the first governor of the faithful, the bearer of the legacy of the prophets." His reception in Egypt was marked by the most solemn pageantry.

However, events of the 19th century were to leave their imprint on this personage. Firstly, Egypt's relations with the Ottoman Porte underwent profound changes with the development of the modern state and the success of Egypt's rulers in acquiring a high degree of autonomy. Their concomitant attempt to centralise the state excluded outside intervention, which ultimately affected the office of the imperial magistrate appointed from Istanbul. Mohamed Ali and Ismail were the most ardent proponents of Egyptian autonomy and it was during their respective reigns that this office suffered its greatest setbacks. The famous Egyptian historian, Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Al-Jabarti, relates Mohamed Ali's attempts to curtail its authority: "One day, on the secret orders of the governor, the sheikhs and other administrative officials met in the house of Al-Bakri in order to deliberate what action to take against the imperial judge whose greed and tyranny in appropriating the people's money and crops knew no bounds. They made a list during this assembly of the offences committed by the judge and appended to it a petition to the governor to intervene in the manner he deems best." With this petition in hand, Mohamed Ali was able to bring "the grand and proficient master" under his control. That and the appointment of the son of one judge to replace his father at the end of his term and rejected another Istanbul appointee is evidence of the authority he gained over this position.

Mohamed Ali's grandson, Ismail, had a different method of dealing with the Porte: money in exchange for imperial concessions, toward Egyptian sovereignty. In this matter, Ismail reached an agreement with Istanbul that the Porte would receive 250 Ottoman liras per month in order to keep the Turkish-appointed judge at home. The agreement also entitled Ismail to appoint a deputy to act in the judge's stead and this appointment would be sanctioned by an imperial decree. That this system remained in

effect until the British occupation meant that Istanbul's de facto jurisdiction over this appointment was nullified.

The status of the chief justice was further affected by the judicial reforms that took place in the 1870s. The reforms, in part a response to numerous social and economic changes and in part due to the chaos of the consular courts created by the Ottoman capitulations system, introduced a dual judicial system consisting of mixed courts, in which either both or one of the litigants were foreigners, and the national courts for Egyptians. As a consequence, the jurisdiction of the religious courts was severely curtailed. Whereas they had formerly ruled over a broad range of legal issues, their competence was restricted to personal status cases. The reforms also brought into being the Ministry of Justice to which the religious courts were subordinated and which was empowered to appoint the justices of the religious courts. As a result of all these changes, the chief justice would increasingly become a religious rather than a judicial figure, a transformation that manifested itself clearly in the crisis of 1899.

In the wake of the British occupation, the position of the chief magistrate would receive a third mortal blow. Just as the British attempted to extend their control over all other administrations, the Ministry of Justice would not be spared and they created the post of adviser to the Ministry of Justice who would in effect be the major architect of judicial affairs. The first person to occupy this post was a John Scott.

Although the British in general were wary of intervening in religious affairs such as the waqf (religious endowments) foundations, Al-Azhar and the religious courts, they made an exception in the case of the latter when they intervened in favour of the civil and national courts to the detriment of the religious courts. The British were on the whole wise to shun meddling in such sensitive matters. Their attempt purportedly "to reform the religious courts" was one of the few occasions when they got their fingers burnt by igniting religious passions. It was an event which *Al-Ahram* followed with deep interest.

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One of the attributes of Ottoman sovereignty over Egypt in the 19th century was the appointment of a chief justice in Cairo. But Egyptian rulers from Mohamed Ali to Tawfik towards the end of the century systematically hacked away at the chief justice's authority. The British helped the government in this after they occupied Egypt in 1882. It was only after Egypt officially became a British protectorate at the time of World War I that Ottoman sovereignty over the country ended and, with it, the right to name the chief justice. Dr Yunan Labib Rizq tells the story as gleaned from the pages of *Al-Ahram*

the rulings of the court should be implemented in accordance with the same procedures that apply to the implementation of the rulings of the national courts. By the end of 1898 a bill for the reform of the religious courts had been drawn up. The bill, which had taken over a year to prepare, was received by the public with considerable scepticism. It called for the creation of a supreme court consisting of five judges, "the chief justice, the mufti of Egypt, the mufti of the Ministry of Justice and two members appointed by the government in accordance with the recommendation of the minister of justice." It was the issue of the last two appointees that stirred suspicions. In addition, Article 12 of the bill stipulated: "The chief justice shall be selected by the government and appointed in accordance with the customary procedures. Likewise, we shall undertake the selection and appointment of the mufti of Egypt in accordance with the customary procedures."

To Egyptians, this was not the type of reform they had envisioned for the religious court system. On the contrary, they saw it as an encroachment on the religious authority of the Ottoman sultan in his capacity as the Muslim caliph. Certainly they sensed that behind the bill were British designs to tamper with religious affairs. It was one thing for Ismail to freeze the position of the imperial magistrate by paying a number of purses to the Supreme Porte every year. It was entirely another matter to infringe upon the sultan's religious authority in making this appointment, particularly in light of developments that had combined to fire religious sentiment over the previous years.

One such development transpired in the wake of the Russian-Turkish war and the Congress of Berlin of 1878 which convened in order to redraw Ottoman territories. In response to the Great Powers' designs to fragment the empire, Sultan Abdel-Hamid II introduced the policy of "pan-Islamism" intended to unite all Muslims under the banner of his religious authority. The policy was received enthusiastically in all Islamic countries, including Egypt.

*Al-Ahram* was acutely aware of the potential dangers of meddling in the Muslims' religious affairs and it cautioned against tampering with the religious courts. These courts, it said, "are purely religious and their reform should be undertaken by Muslims alone. For the British to lay their hands on these courts we say no! And for them to institute their own ideas as a basis for the desired reform, again we say no!"

It was not long before *Al-Ahram's* fears proved accurate. The chief justice and Sheikh Hassana Al-Nawawi, the rector of Al-Azhar, took officials in Abdeen Palace, Dubara Palace (the residence of the British high commissioner) and the Ministry of Justice by surprise by issuing a *fatwa* (religious ruling) condemning the bill of law which the ministry was to present to the Legislative Assembly. *Al-Ahram* writes, "The government was in a panic and the cabinet met in order to deliberate over this matter. We do not believe that it will violate the *fatwa* in the pursuit of a matter that would offend religious sensitivities, particularly as the occupiers have declared repeatedly that they would honour and respect these feelings." The newspaper's hopes proved misplaced. The government went ahead with presenting the bill to the Legislative Assembly only to receive yet a greater shock.

The new bill was slated for discussion at the assembly's meeting of 10 May 1899. Prior to this, however, the government delivered to the assembly its response to the *fatwa*. It was also decided that all the ministers should attend, "imagining that their presence would strike fear into the hearts of the members of the assembly and compel them to change their opinion in line with British policy for which the ministers of the Egyptian government are the most strategic tools."

"The Great Assembly" was the headline under which *Al-Ahram* reported on the scheduled meeting. Following the speech-

es of the minister of justice and the minister of foreign affairs, whose defence of the proposed bill was delivered in French, the sheikh of Al-Azhar addressed the assembly. He said, "In my capacity as a member of the Legislative Council and the mufti of Egypt, I have decreed and continue to decree that this bill constitutes a breach of Islamic law and should not be put into effect. Nor is it acceptable to appoint two judges from the National Appellate Court who rule in accordance with positive law which sometimes conflicts with Islamic law and who are, therefore, not competent to rule in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence." The minutes of the meeting, published in *Al-Ahram*, recorded that when the sheikh of Al-Azhar finished his speech, "the chief justice stood up and said, 'I second that objection!' Then the sheikh of Al-Azhar, deeply agitated, left the assembly and he was followed by the chief justice. The chairman prevailed upon some of the members to convince the two officials to return and, after considerable pleading, they did. There followed a most awkward silence." As might be expected, the assembly rejected the bill and asked the government to draw up a new proposal for the reform of the religious courts. The "dark scowls" on the ministers' faces as they left the assembly would not bode well for the sheikh of Al-Azhar and the chief justice. Indeed it was less than a month later that Sheikh Hassana was made to pay the price for his "offence". On 3 June 1899 *Al-Ahram* reports, "His Eminence Sheikh Hassana Al-Nawawi has been dismissed from his position as mufti of Egypt and rector of Al-Azhar." The authorities then turned their attention to Chief Justice Gamaleddin.

Their first step was to attempt to disparage the judge's credentials and they published a communiqué in the newspapers to that effect. The communiqué said that Gamaleddin had been appointed to his position during the reign of the Khedive Tawfiq after the death of the previous chief justice, Abdel-Rahman Effendi, whose appointment by the Egyptian government did not take place in accordance with an agreement between Cairo and Istanbul. As for Gamaleddin he had no more than a telegram from the Supreme Porte appointing him as "commissioner of religious affairs in Egypt." As there was no post by that name, the khedive appointed him as chief justice. The communiqué concludes, "In light of the above, it is clear that his eminence has been appointed as chief justice on the authority of a telegram stipulating a position that does not exist and that the sole authorisation for his appointment which he continues to exercise was the noble decree promulgated by the khedive of Egypt on 1 April 1891." The implication of course was that since the judge was appointed by khedival decree, he

could just as easily be dismissed by another decree, if not as "noble".

Egyptian public opinion was not easily taken in by the ministers' argument. The situation had changed since the days of Ismail whose agreement with the government of Istanbul represented a bid for Egyptian independence from the Ottomans. Under the British occupation, however, the attempt to denigrate the position of chief justice appeared as one more manifestation of British suzerainty. This was clearly the interpretation which *Al-Ahram* put on the affair, compelling it to rise to the defence of Gamaleddin. *Al-Ahram*, like the other nationalist newspapers, appealed to the judge not to yield to pressures to resign such as those touted in the pro-occupation newspapers, foremost of which was *Al-Muqattam*. Evidently, the judge decided to resist these pressures, which was cause for *Al-Ahram* to cheer on his behalf. "His eminence the chief justice is not prepared to sacrifice one atom of his rightful claim to his position and to the authority granted to him by his majesty the sultan." The article concluded with a final caution, alerting the government to the consequences that might ensue "if it does not adhere to the policy of observing religious feelings and the requirements of religious law."

On 2 June 1899, *Al-Ahram* took considerable glee in announcing that the khedive had called a meeting with the ministers in which "it was decided to keep matters as they were and to retain His Eminence Chief Justice Gamaleddin in his position and that a royal decree would be promulgated rescinding the previous decree stipulating the appointment of two judges from the appellate court to the supreme court." These decisions, the newspaper continued, were taken following consultations with Lord Cromer.

To the Egyptians this was interpreted as a defeat for British attempts at meddling in Egyptian religious affairs. On 21 January 1901 Gamaleddin passed away. Less than a month later, the ship bearing his successor wended its way into the port of Alexandria. The new chief justice of Egypt, Abdel-Rahman Yahya, was received with all due pomp and ceremony, as we can read in *Al-Ahram*. Egypt's rulers would have to wait another 13 years until the British declared Egypt as their protectorate before the remaining symbols of Ottoman sovereignty would fall. One of these was his eminence the chief justice.

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# The Republic of Korea celebrates its National Foundation Day

## A message from the Korean ambassador to Egypt

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Korean people on the occasion of the 4328th anniversary of the Korean National Foundation Day on 3 October. I am deeply moved by celebrating this special occasion in Cairo, which is one of the cradles of civilization.

A look back at 5,000 years of Korean history reveals triumphs and tragedies, successes and struggles which have been instrumental in shaping Korea and Korean people. The long history illustrates that Korea is considered one of the oldest nations in Asia, with a distinctive cultural inheritance and a unique history. Through Koreans, Chinese and Japanese may appear the same, they are historically and culturally extremely different.

Over the last several hundred years when Korean rulers did not welcome foreign contacts, the nation was known as the "Hermit Kingdom" but, now in Korea's modern era, the mist of early morning calm has disappeared and the nation can be called the "Dynamic Country".

Korean history dates back to 2333BC. This traceable history has gone through three influential eras. The first was when King Tan-Gun established the first kingdom named Choson literally meaning the "Land of Morning Calm". The second era began under the leadership of President Park Chung Hee and featured economic development. Since Korea launched its first Economic Development Plan in 1962, Korea's economic growth has been among the fastest in the world. The country's real GNP has been expanded by an average

of more than 8 per cent per year and merchandise trade volume increased from US\$47 million in 1962 to \$260.2 billion in 1995.

Under the administration of President Kim Young Sam, Korea is being pushed to start the third era of its history. This era is featured by greater openness and international cooperation through seghwa, or a globalisation policy, which is spearheaded by President Kim. In all areas, including trade and foreign investment, Korea's degree of openness is approaching the level of the advanced countries. The Republic of Korea now finally stands among the ranks of the most democratic countries of the world. In pursuing this status, we have drawn in a millennia-old national legacy of the nation-finding ideal of *Hong-ik Ingan*, "Benefits to Mankind". This motto has much in common with that of democracy as both seek to guarantee everyone freedom, human dignity and the right to pursue happiness. We still endeavor to bring the ideal of "Benefits to all Mankind" to blossom via the implementation of democracy.

At this moment, I would like to seize this opportunity to urge the whole world to faithfully support the peaceful unification of Korea, and the establishment of an everlasting peace on the Korean peninsula. A unified Korea would be able to contribute much more to world peace and prosperity than a divided one.

I would like to pay a high tribute to H.E. President Hosni Mubarak, whose outstanding leadership has been no less evident on the international scene. Moreover, his tireless efforts in cementing ties between our two countries have been greatly appreciated by our government and people. Since the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Egypt and Korea in April 1995, our two countries have worked towards creating more collaborative relationship between our two countries. Thanks to H.E. President Mubarak, Egypt and Korea have maintained close relations in all respects. Our two nations are now co-operating more closely in the economic field in particular.



Kim Young Sam, president of the Republic of Korea



Yim Sung Joon, Korean ambassador to Egypt

The exchange of businessmen's visits between the two countries illustrates growing bilateral relations between the two countries. Minister of Economy and International Cooperation Nawal El-Talawy's latest visit to South Korea is the best evidence of opening new access for Korean investments in Egypt. In addition, Korean business delegations are going to take part at the next Middle East economic summit, due to be held in Cairo next November. The political field has been also strengthened through People's Assembly Speaker Ahmed Fathi Sorour's visit to Seoul.

In fact, our two nations should join together to integrate two different civilizations in tune with harmonious world system. On one hand, Korea is located at the heart of the East Asian region, being one of the three main axes of economic growth. On the other hand, Egypt is playing a key role not only in the Middle East but also in the entire world. By co-operating with one another, Korea and Egypt can help each other attain their national, regional and international goals, now and in the future.

The Republic of Korea has gone through a long and thorny path before it grabbed the world's attention for its success in terms of both democratisation and industrialisation. However, the Republic of Korea is actively endeavouring in the course of our development to the other developing countries.

Compiled by  
Mohamed Youssef Habib

## Korean contributions towards Egyptian industry

ELECTRONIC industries are the most promising industries of the future, participating in advancing development plans in different areas due to the diversification of the necessary cadres and investments, which range from limited investments to open-ended ones. The quantity of investments, however, depend on the type of business and production required. There are limited investments which provide industries with parts used in production like plastic, metal components, cables, etc. There are also processing industries for limited quantity products which include designing and programming, which depend mainly on certain tools and equipment. As for intermediate investments, they are required for processing industries involving mass production, and other industries requiring a skilled work force such as the production of telecommunications equipment, as well as some electronic components which require technical knowledge. There are also extensive investments in the production of hi-tech components (such as transistor circuits, filters, high-intensity coils, etc).

The Arab Organisation of Industries (AOI) and its electronics factory have 15 years of experience in the field of electronics with several foreign and international companies. It also has experience in providing skilled expertise. A strategic plan was implemented five years ago to expand this industry through three main phases in co-operation with its Korean counterpart in the following fields:

- Mass production of processing industries to be exported at competitive prices and qualities; especially after the factory has obtained the international quality certificate ISO 9002.
- Providing the necessary scientific and technical cadres for designing and programming at a preparatory phase until Egyptian products appear on the market and fill the local needs.
- Introducing feeder industries and likewise progressive industries like production lines with diverse annual capacities up to a million phones, and a half million coils and 250,000 combining particles. In addition to those production lines, special technologies have been transferred to allow the production of the previous items according to different standards that fulfills the requirements of the local market.
- In an attempt to provide our clients with a the best service, a main service center was opened recently in Nasr City at Makram Ebeid, in addition to a service network covering most governorates. Thus the following results were achieved:
- The factory was considered a main supplier of phones, coils, and transformers for prevailing industries, with attempts to export them in the works.
- Introduction of medium capacity telephone-switching industries with progressive technology to serve many different places in Egypt like organisations, hospitals and companies.
- Reaching mass production with competitive prices and quality using modern machinery and equipment.

## Korean economy soars

SINCE the inauguration of the Kim Young Sam government in February 1993, the Korean economy has been soaring along an upward path, ending years of low growth.

The Korean economy grew at a 5 per cent annual rate in 1992 but surged at a 5.8 per cent clip in 1993, while the growth in gross domestic product jumped to 8.6 per cent a year later.

Boosted by surging exports and corporate capital investment, the advance in GDP for the last year was tallied at 9 per cent, the most impressive performance in recent years.

Although the pace of growth is expected to slow down, the economy is widely forecast to make a soft landing this year, growing at a substantial rate of 7 to 7.5 per cent.

Prices are also predicted to remain stable this year with consumer prices projected to rise at a 4.5 per cent annual rate, down from last year's 4.7 per cent.

Amid the continued economic boom, Korea's per-capita gross national product (GNP) for the last year broke the \$10,000 mark; catapulting the nation into the ranks of advanced countries. The per-capita GNP amounted to \$10,067 last year.

It is not on the domestic economic front alone that the Kim administration has achieved remarkable feats. In line with the president's strategy of globalisation, Korea has sought to promote its role in the international arena, which officials say befits its economic power.

In late March last year, Korea formally filed an application to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as part of President Kim's new five-year economic programme (1993-1997). Consultations between Korea and the OECD secretariat are now under way on Saou's admission to the club of 25 industrial nations, which Seoul officials say will end by as early as July of this year.

Given its commitment to economic liberalisation, Korea would have little difficulty being admitted to the international organisation, government officials say.

Boding well for its admission, Korea passed preliminary reviews by OECD's two committees, or insurance and maritime and transport committees, late last year.

What benefit will Korea enjoy by becoming an OECD member? Korea's formal entry into the organisation will give it access to precious information about the global economy and key discussions on major global economic issues ahead of non-members while sharply increasing its status in the international community, officials say.

As to the problem of meeting numerous obligations to become an OECD member, officials say that such requirements are not obligations but just recommendations. The OECD acknowledges a member country's right to postpone the fulfillment of its recommended codes to a considerable extent under the principle of gradual liberalisation, according to officials.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH KOREA on THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY



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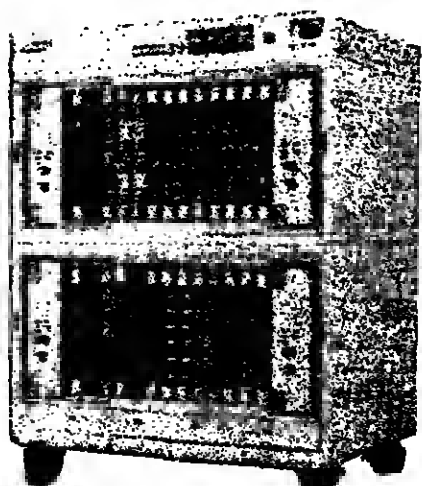
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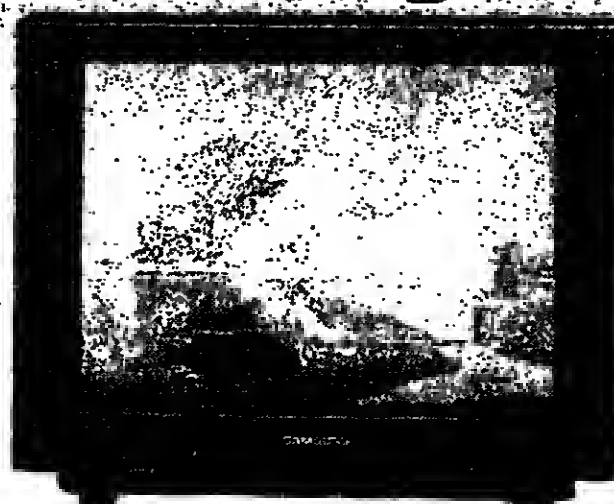
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**Mohamed  
Nessim:**

# Mission impossible

**He has worked and lived in silence. He is holding his tongue; other generations will tell his stories**

Mohamed Nessim's stories are deceptive. It all sounds — well, easy, almost. He led the 1970 operation, planned by the General Security Apparatus, to destroy an Israeli oil rig on its way to the Gulf of Suez. He also planned the Egyptian secret agent known as Raafat El-Haggan — immortalised in a television series of the same name — inside Israel to one of the century's most successful secret intelligence operations. He planned the escape of Abdel-Hamid El-Sarrag from Al-Muzza prison after the collapse of the Syrian-Egyptian merger.

These operations are among the only ones that are known to the public. The others — how many? — are not for general consumption. The intelligence apparatus continues to benefit from his experience. Mohamed Nessim is now 69; but he used to be called Nessim the Lion-hearted in secret service corridors.

Nessim is currently working in the tourist business (as chairman of the Sinai Company for Hotels and Diving Clubs). It has been a long time since he has talked about himself or his memories. He was born in El-Mugharbilin ("The Sievers"), a popular quarter in the very heart of Cairo. The family — of the extended patriarchal variety (Nessim's father and uncles lived in the same household) — was poor. When he was five, he was sent to El-Medani Mosque for his lessons: for the inhabitants of the Fatimid city and surroundings, history and architectural accomplishment are part of everyday life. "Growing up in the area, I inherited its inhabitants' pluck, bravery and ability to come through difficult situations." They were lessons he would have cause to be thankful for.

He lost his mother when he was three. This taught him independence. He always liked to prove himself and, because he was out of schoolwork, he focused on sports, at which he excelled. He played almost any game, but ultimately specialised in boxing and hockey. He represented Egypt at international competitions in those two games, then trained at Al-Ahli Club. He was the hero of the Military Academy, the army and the rest of the country for several years. But academic lay in wait. He was prevented from participating in the 1948 Olympics because he was sitting for a make-up exam. Nevertheless, he represented Egypt in several international hockey games. That scar on his nose is neither an old boxing wound nor a scar brought back from the war: the culprit was a hockey ball. Nessim was

captain of the Ahli boxing team, but he stopped playing hockey in 1956.

Boxing earned him a scholarship to study at the Military Academy in 1950. Nessim loved sports so much, he married an Egyptian gymnast. Her training, too, was to serve her in life: "She had all the necessary features of an intelligence officer's wife — strong nerves, stability and rationality." Their two sons studied mechanical engineering and architecture.

Sports controlled Nessim's life. He joined the Military Academy, where jocks were revered. The academy, which he joined in 1949, changed many of his habits. It taught him discipline, tenacity, seriousness, and perseverance. He graduated in early 1951, in time to fight in the 1956 War.

That year — the year he turned 21 — was a turning point in Nessim's life. In December of this year, he was transferred to the general intelligence service. At that time, it was a budding apparatus. He continued to work in the secret service until 1971.

Mohamed Nessim's history with Raafat El-Haggan began after the latter had been in Israel for several years. The two

training in wireless transmission and coding of messages. After five years, El-Haggan refused to continue the training. Nessim felt that the matter required more than mere persuasion, so he threatened to kill El-Haggan. This was sufficient to subdue him, and training continued.

Even relatively mundane situations were charged. El-Haggan fell in love. Nessim sympathised with his plight, but it was out of his power to give El-Haggan the go-ahead. Back in Cairo, Nessim spoke to the head of the secret service and El-Haggan's marriage was authorised.

Nessim was constantly a target for Mossad agents and other Western intelligence apparatuses. In Israel he was so well-known that he became the subject of a number of amusing anecdotes — some of which he heard himself when he visited Israel recently. His new job has led him to visit his old enemies twice. Nessim now says that the atmosphere of peace should be turned to the profit of tourism.

But jokes were the least of his problems at the time. Conspiracies to assassinate him were constantly being hatched. In 1961, Nessim was appointed to run the Arab eastern region from its centre in Beirut. Arab resistance to imperialism had reached its climax, and Nasser was at the peak of his strength. Nessim was lured into a certain sense of security, which encouraged him to take his wife and two sons to his new post. Shortly afterwards, he was informed that there was a plot to kidnap his oldest son. He whisked the family back to Cairo. A few days later, he found explosives wired to his car.

An Egyptian living in Beirut and opposed to Nasser and the regime was also charged with kidnapping Nessim. But before he could say mission accomplished, the agent found himself his target's victim. Nessim had him brought to Cairo.

One gets the feeling, though, that anticipation was Nessim's worst enemy. "Fear of dying or danger is nothing compared to the tension and anxiety that an intelligence officer feels while he is planning and preparing to execute an operation. He also waits impatiently for success."

Sent to contain the repercussions of the failed merger, Nessim continued to work in Lebanon from 1961 to 1965. He was the link between Egypt and the Baath Party, as well as the dissenting section which called itself the Social Unionists, Al-Qawmiyyin Al-Arab, led by George Habash (a personal friend), and the Lebanese Communist Party.

The days of the Syrian-Egyptian union provide the backdrop for some of Nessim's more heart-stopping missions. Following a disagreement between Field-Marshal Abdel-Hakim Amer and Abdel-Hamid El-Sarrag, the latter resigned and headed for Syria. While he was there, Syria seceded from the union. Authorities in Egypt imagined that El-Sarrag must have played a role in the secession. But, while the dissenters had bargained with him to join them, he had refused categorically. He was arrested and detained in Al-Muzza prison — and Nessim received orders to help El-Sarrag escape. Having arranged the escape with a contact working inside the prison, Nessim was able to spring El-Sarrag and take him into Lebanon. From there, he put him on a plane distributing Egyptian newspapers in Lebanon and taking Lebanese papers back to Cairo. While everyone was busy looking for the fugitive, the Egyptian newspapers had it on excellent authority that Abdel-Nasser was receiving him in Cairo.

On 21 February 1970, Amin Howeihi, director of General Intelligence, ordered the destruction of an Israeli rig set up in the Gulf of Suez. Nessim's mission was to destroy the rig before it penetrated the Red Sea. Israel held all of Sinai; its army dominated the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. The rig, seen as a further humiliation, had to be destroyed. War was impossible: the country was undergoing reconstruction. A commando operation was seen as the best means of dealing with the situation.

An attempt to blow up the rig on its first stop in Senegal failed; the rig left Dakar hours before the execution of the mission. Nessim admits to a sigh of relief. It was "...as if a mountain had been lifted from my shoulders... The execution of the operation in Dakar could have blown the entire mission before its execution, because the rig was near a French military base, and French boats surrounded it."

Nessim spent two days in Dakar erasing any sign of the Egyptians' presence. The equipment was transported to Abidjan, the rig's next stop. On 6 March 1970, Nessim traveled to Abidjan. The operation was a success. Nessim

was able to deflect the political crisis that could have followed — but the Israeli ambassador, in an ironic twist, was expelled from Abidjan soon after.

Nasser was Nessim's hero. "He was our leader and ideal. He mirrored all our ambitions. He was the leader of national liberation movements at the Arab and African levels. I was among those who trusted his decisions. I was also close to him because of my work, until he authorised me after the 1967 setback to investigate the cases of corruption within the general intelligence apparatus." In 1970, Nasser secretly awarded him a medal of merit for his role in the rig operation.

In 1975, having left the intelligence service, Nessim decided it was time for a change in career. He started work at the Ministry of Tourism, then moved on to

serve first as vice-chairman, then as chairman of the Tourist Promotion Agency. From the secret service to tourism? "Many people think that the two jobs are different, but I do not agree with them. There are several similarities between them: in intelligence work, the more diversified your public relations, the greater your success. Reading is also key. The same is true for tourism: reading and public relations are the pillars of success for the businessman in that field." He spends his time between Cairo and Sharm El-Sheikh, where he heads the Association of Sharm El-Sheikh Investors. This association undertakes the development and preservation of this spot in Sinai — an area which he fought to liberate.

Profile by Galal Nassar



would meet in Rome and El-Haggan would report on his situation and describe how he lived in Israeli society.

In the pre-process days, cloak-and-dagger was routine. In 1959, Nessim summoned El-Haggan to Cyprus for

its leadership in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, as well as the dissenting section which called itself the Social Unionists, Al-Qawmiyyin Al-Arab, led by George Habash (a personal friend), and the Lebanese Communist Party.

## Obituary

### Mohamed Shebl: An affair with film

The film director, radio personality and *Al-Ahram Weekly's* film critic Mohamed Shebl, born in 1949, died on Tuesday, 1 October.

Mohamed Shebl graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University in 1969 and continued his studies at the University of Nanyang, Singapore, and later in Moscow. After joining the Foreign Ministry he was posted as a junior diplomat to the Egyptian Embassy in Moscow, though he left the diplomatic service in the early '70s, after which he began free studies in cinema in the US. On his return to Cairo he began work on the European Radio programme, drawing on his encyclopaedic knowledge of contemporary music for his hugely popular early morning show.

As a school boy Mohamed had attended a screening of *Gamila Bu Hreid*, at which the director, Youssef Chahine, was present. It was at that moment, he later recalled, that his passion for films began. And in 1978 that passion was to be fulfilled when his first full length feature was released. Released in 1978 *Anyab*



(Fangs), starring Ahmed Adawiya, Mona Gabr and Ali El-Haggan was followed in 1983 by *El-Ta'wika* (The Talisman), with Youssef, Tahia Karioka and Mahmoud Yassin. Youssef also played the female lead opposite Ahmed Zaki in Mohamed Shebl's next film, the magical realist *Al-Kabous* (The Nightmare, 1989). His last feature film, produced in the 1990s, was *Gharun wa Intigam bil-Satour* (Love and Revenge with a Cleaver), with Farouk El-Fishawi and Isaad Younis. Mohamed also directed and wrote scripts for several documentaries — including a monumental 14-hour series on Youssef Chahine, *Al-Qadiya* (The Trial), a part of this mammoth project, was screened at this year's

Locarno Film Festival. His collaboration with Youssef Chahine also included his appearances as a heart surgeon in *Hadouta Masriya* (An Egyptian Tale) — one of several cameo appearances he was to make on the other side of the camera.

Mohamed Shebl was at work on pre-production for a new feature film, once again with Youssef, when his tragically early death intervened. Since the inception of *Al-Ahram Weekly* he had contributed regular film reviews, in addition to profiles, mostly of colleagues from the world of cinema. Those contributions, together with his unfailing sense of humour, and his determination always to see the funny side of life, will be sorely missed.



Mohamed Shebl during the filming of his documentary *Tiba Ta'shaq Al-Mawt* (Thebes Worships Death)



## The Obaied Gas Sales Agreement



Dr. Hamdi Al Banbi, The Minister of Petroleum is standing between: Engineer Abdel Khalek Ayed, Chairman of EGPC, right, and Mr. Roger Patey Chairman of Shell companies in Egypt.

On the 26th September, 1996 the Obaied Gas Sales Agreement Was signed by the EGPC and Shell Egypt. This Gas Sales Agreement provides for the delivery of gas from Shell's Obaied concession in the Western Desert to EGPC's national gas distribution grid in the vicinity of Sidi Kerir. Gas deliveries will commence in the 1st half of 1999 at a delivery rate of 300 mm scf/day (million standard cubic feet per day). This major development project, costing around US\$ 600 million, will be implemented by Bapetco.

Today Shell has invested US\$ 150 million in exploration and appraisal activities in this concession since 1989. This is the largest gas project in Egypt and will make a major contribution to Egypt's economy and objectives of promoting and expanding domestic gas consumption and subsequently developing export opportunities. Shell is proud to be involved in this major project and would like to recognise the encouragement received from the minister of petroleum:

Dr. Hamid Al Banbi